

Having won an Virginia Chamber of Commerce award as One of the Fastest-Growing companies in the State of Virginia, and a sizable contract with another Federal Agency to assist in Modernizing their IT Infrastructure, World Services, LLC continues its Growth Trend



Shueyb Ali
President and Chief Executive Officer

World Services, LLC
www.world-servicesllc.com

Contact:
Shueyb Ali
(240)535-9811
Sali@world-servicesllc.com

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Mr. Ali, we spoke about six months ago. Would you bring us up-to-date about World Services?

Mr. Ali: Since that time we have won a reasonably sizable contract with another federal agency to assist with modernizing their IT infrastructure. Also, last month, we won an award with the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, as one of the fastest-growing companies in the state of Virginia. Out of those fifty participants, we won the Vanguard Technology Award, so that was pretty exciting.

CEOCFO: What does the Chamber look at to decide on a winner?

Mr. Ali: To be eligible for the list, a company must have recorded revenue of at least \$200,000 in 2014. It also must have posted a profit in 2017 and have revenue of less than \$200 million in its most recent fiscal year. World Services was listed as number 7 on this list of growing companies between 2014 - 2017. Also, World Services won the prestigious Vanguard Technology Award, which based on innovation in technology.

CEOCFO: What would come under the innovation category? What have you done and what are you doing that is different?

Mr. Ali: Artificial intelligence/machine learning, blockchain technology, and investigating the creation or use of an IT Lab as Service to continue to explore new technologies. We are also evaluating augmented reality tools that can be used for various utility companies and the federal sector.

CEOCFO: How do you know it is the right time for World Services to be involved or to start?

Mr. Ali: Regarding Artificial intelligence/machine learning, it was a logical transition. One of the biggest challenges that organizations face is understanding their massive amount of data. Artificial intelligence allows organizations to use data in a more efficient, accurate, speedy way to make mission-driven decisions.

CEOCFO: When big data first became a buzz term, lots of companies provided business intelligence but it was not very usable, and it has moved on to AI. Why does AI work?

Mr. Ali: Artificial intelligence/Machine learning algorithms have been around for a while. However, the ability to apply automated complex mathematical calculations to big data in a repeatable, efficient, and faster manner is a recent development. The logic used in AI can make sense of massive amounts of data, both structured and unstructured that can be used for more accurate decision-making, predictive analytics, and reporting.

Our philosophy with Big Data is to focus on getting our arms around all of the data, providing logical repositories for the data, and providing analytics for reporting and decision making. However, both big data and artificial intelligence work closely together.

CEOCFO: Do you see AI as something an agency would specifically ask for, or might that be part of the solution you would craft?

Mr. Ali: Yes to both. Some organizations are further along and make great use case for Artificial Intelligence. Others are aware of the benefits of AI, and however, maybe due to budgets, some agencies are electing not to explore AI at this time. I believe, most of the agencies that deal with critical data have already progressed, or at least, explored AI.

CEOCFO: You mentioned utilities; what are you looking at there and why now?

Mr. Ali: We are using Augmented Reality in assisting engineers working in the areas of Energy, Water Supply, and municipal maintenance. Engineers in these industries are faced with making decisions that have a significant impact on our comfort and safety; therefore it is vital they have accurate data to make important decisions. Our solutions provide engineers with data on assets such as power lines and water pipes by providing an eye-level view using Augmented Reality glasses to determine pipe pressure, power line voltage, and maintenance records. These solutions provide engineers with data to make accurate, efficient, informed, and safe decision.

“Without a doubt, we have a fantastic group of professionals, technicians, project managers, data scientists, that are passionate not only about what they do but also about how they serve their clients. Our people are indeed, key to our success!” - Shueyb Ali

CEOCFO: With so much change in augmented reality, how are you crafting the solution when there is a newer version that could come along quickly. Is it more the design than the specific tools you are using?

Mr. Ali: Software and design change more frequently than the hardware. Due to requirements either by clients or our staff, we make changes to the software for reasons such as adding new functionality, maintenance, or security. The hardware doesn't seem to change as frequently. The hardware we recommend to clients must meet specific requirement such for performance such as the ability to work under extreme temperatures, durable related to a drop distance and computing power. Unfortunately, the hardware industry does not provide many options that meet all of our criteria, therefore, the change of hardware has been slow for Augmented Reality glasses that meet our specifications.

CEOCFO: You mentioned in the beginning that you took on a large contract. How is your approach different when it is a more encompassing project?

Mr. Ali: The larger contract has multiple task orders, and each task order has a different client, therefore we must manage the expectations of each client, which can be a challenge. Each client has their own personality and style for working with vendors. We understand a cookie cutter strategy will not work. Consequently, our staff employs a flexible and collaborative approach. We take time to understand and know our clients, this alone can be a challenge due to our client's limited time and resources.

CEOCFO: On your website in your president's message I see “At World Services we learn together, build together and win together.” How does that play out day-by-day?

Mr. Ali: We are big proponents of investing in our people. the term "we learn together", means recruiting talented, eager people who are open to share their knowledge and learn from others. Also, we promote continued growth personally and professionally, we encourage our staff to attend seminars and classes, to learn the latest technology, and bring that information back to the organization for others to learn, which explains "build together". Using "We learn together and build together" sets our team up for competent, collaborative, and motivated employees, this has increased our ability to "win together".

CEOCFO: Where is does the political atmosphere come in, or is it somewhat irrelevant for what you are doing?

Mr. Ali: In the federal government contracting industry, politics sometimes come into play. In a perfect world, all vendors would be viewed equally, but that is not always the case, sometimes clients favor companies for various reasons. I believe federal client want a vendor they feel confident will solve their problems. For a vendor to get this point, the vendor has to build the potential client's confidence and trust. We believe politics can be positive, as long as it doesn't cross contractual or legal boundaries.

CEOCFO: World Services is being one of the fastest-growing companies, how do you maintain that?

Mr. Ali: We maintain it very carefully. We take a conservative approach toward our finances. We understand the importance of taking risks in business, we carefully analyze and calculate risks. As an example, we spent a significant

amount of money to obtain our Capability Model Maturity Integration (CMMI), which we received Level 3 in both services and development. It was a calculated risk in the sense that it was expensive, it required sizable effort, multiple internal and external resources. We realized the pay-off in obtaining our CMMI could be a game changer and it has worked in our favor. Since having our CMMI, we have won contracts that had a CMMI requirement.

CEO CFO: How do you evaluate opportunities for certifications or for training?

Mr. Ali: We look for what is trending in the industry or consistent requirements on government Request for Proposals (RFP). We are also aware of contracting vehicles used by the government, in addition to the certifications. Some of the contracting vehicles require a screening process that may include submitting a proposal to be selected on the contracting vehicle. Without appropriate contracting vehicles and certifications, companies will not qualify to bid on work as a Prime Contractor. So we stay diligent in being aware of the trends for training and certification for staff and our organization.

CEO CFO: Clearly your people are important, you have talked about it and it is evident in whatever we read about your company. Are you having the same problem getting talent as most people are or do potential employees recognize the difference in your approach so that they want to work at World Services?

Mr. Ali: Finding qualified employees that are a match for our company values can be challenging. However, we have been fortunate. I believe our success is due to our diligence with recruiting, which has consistently found individuals that fit our culture. Also, other avenues we have used to pull in candidates have been through employee referrals, social events, and sometimes referred by other companies.

CEO CFO: What have you learned in the last six months?

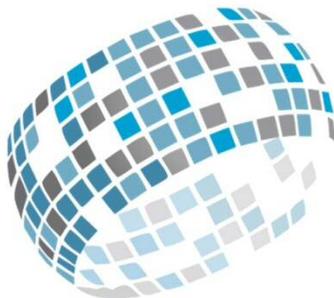
Mr. Ali: I have learned to embrace the concept of emotional intelligence. I've heard the term used and expressed in various ways. However, for me, it means self-awareness, the ability to gracefully accept a loss or defeat, empathy, to act instead of reacting, patience, and employing authentic calmness during stressful situations. As our business grows, I continuously conduct a self-reflection on my skills and ability as a leader. Am I where I should be professional and emotionally to best suit the company? If not, what do I need to improve and what's the path to achieve the goal.

CEO CFO: What are you surprised we can do with technology today and what are you surprised that we cannot do yet?

Mr. Ali: I'm speaking as a non-medical professional. I am aware we have made significant advances in medical technology and medicine. Also, we have collected an enormous amount of data on the human body and the diseases that attack the body. Therefore, what is slightly surprising to me is that we are not further developed using technology such as artificial intelligence and nanotechnology to combat diseases that have impacted and/or taken lives.

CEO CFO: Why pay attention to World Services? Why is the company noteworthy?

Mr. Ali: It is our people. Without a doubt, we have a fantastic group of professionals, technicians, project managers, data scientists, that are passionate not only about what they do but also about how they serve their clients. Our people are indeed, key to our success!



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