

Soaring Like An Eagle: Eagle Point Stretches To New Heights.

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When Eagle Point of Dubuque, Iowa, was first established in 1983, it was known as Engineering Data Systems Corp. (EDSC). Co-founders John Biver and Scott Taylor, based the company primarily on the sales of its personally designed road design software written in BASIC. They tossed their software into the civil engineering market haphazardly and ended up with a gaggle of requests for more seats. Years passed and the business flourished little. Then, in 1989, Rodney Blum entered the picture. Blum, a part-time consultant, became part owner and operator of EDSC. His suggestion to Biver and Taylor was to focus on telemarketing and the addition of civil engineers and land surveyors to answer questions on a toll-free support line.

Today, Taylor and Blum are no longer with the company, now known worldwide as Eagle Point, a name symbolizing Eagle Point Park, a beautiful landscape near the EDSC headquarters where bald eagles nest. (The software entity was renamed after Ross Perot of Electronic Data Systems (EDS) suggested they choose a new name to avoid confusion in the marketplace.)

Through the Years

Over the years, the company saw good days, growing from a mere five employees to more than 200 from 1990 to 1995. In June of 1995, Eagle Point became publicly owned as the industry was turning highly automated. Blum divided the company into two divisions: hardware and engineering. Changes continued in December of 1999 when Eagle Point acquired Surveyors Module Incorporated (SMI) of Church Hill, Tenn., developer of mobile data collection/surveying software and systems for the surveying market. It was the largest acquisition for Eagle Point and allowed them the benefit of integrating its desk-top expertise with SMI's field software strength. Eagle Point intended to maintain the SMI name as it had been, but closed the Tennessee office to consolidate. SMI's sales department was downsized, founder Stanley Trent pursued opportunities elsewhere and the other employees stayed on as Eagle Point employees, working remotely as many of them already had.

Biver says SMI is a bit of a restart, but stresses that Eagle Point "can get better integrated in the field as on the desktop [through SMI's strengths]."

To do this, Eagle Point forged ahead with product development, launching the SMI Pocket PC in June, field software designed for use on the Compaq iPAQ with Pocket PC, the evolving industry hardware choice. It has a point storage capability to hold over 40,000 raw data and coordinate points, its memory capacity is 15 times greater than that of the HP48 and it can update graphical stakeout data five times per second using a GPS receiver. The Pocket SMI's stainless steel case has a shape-conforming padded interior to absorb shock, a plug on the left that plugs into a pole mount, and a nine-pin port on the outside that is compatible with the existing SMI hard case cabling. Pocket SMI has an optional Windows-style menu system. With the addition of Pocket SMI, SMI field software is now available in three platforms: HP48, iPAQ and Titan.

Reorganizing for Success

In 2001, Eagle Point made the move to become a privately held company to concentrate more on clients instead of shareholders as it did as a publicly owned company. The structural and building design and con-

struction divisions of Eagle Point were sold to Rod Blum's newly formed company, Digital Canal Corporation in an effort to focus solely on land development solutions.

The new organization lends to helping clients in the long-term rather than focusing on shareholders in the short-term. "In the past, we at times may have made decisions that didn't help our clients long-term, but instead gave us better short-term results to report to stockholders," Biver said in December of 2001. It allowed the company to put a lot of pins on the map, Biver said, which brought in a lot of money, but was not as good for long-term goals. "Our old organization simply wasn't as conducive to developing the necessary quality relationships as our new organization is."

This March, Eagle Point announced a reorganization to enhance its new focus of client-centricity. Included in its new strategy were six key points: to develop a complete understanding of clients' technology needs; to provide the highest product quality; to be the easiest to do business with; to provide successful implementation assurance; to dynamically integrate technologies; and to welcome strategic alliances.

To further the concept of quality relationships and short-term satisfaction, Biver reorganized the structure of Eagle Point's staff in June. The salespeople are warmly known around the office as "relationship managers." The personnel technician department has been beefed up and is proposed to be increased by 27 percent. The technical support force has been reorganized from a pool of telephone sales representatives and a pool of technical support representatives to regional representatives assigned to particular accounts. The new structure is proposed to allow each Eagle Point technician the opportunity to develop personal relationships and specific knowledge about the intricacies of their clients' automation environments, leading to more effective problem-solving and product development efforts.

"To succeed today," Biver says, "organizations must be able to develop a true partnership with technology implementation experts. By virtue of working directly with thousands of land development organizations on technology implementation issues every day, we possess that expertise. Now we are taking substantive steps to improve the 'partnership' portion of the equation."

Tony Wernke, Eagle Point marketing manager, said the technical staff will now be closer to clients, therefore understanding their needs and aiding in the assurance of customer satisfaction. He said they plan to field phone calls as before, but to also be proactive by approaching clients to offer help and maintain good communication links.

"Our strengths are in the area of relationships," Biver says. "When our clients need help they are able to call and know that they can get answers. We will continue to provide comprehensive solutions for the land development industry that are able to be packaged in a way that meets the unique needs of the land surveying community. Our new client-centric focus means that we will strive to do a better job evaluating our clients' needs with them so that the solutions we provide are of value and show a return on the investment." Another effort taken to strengthen the client-centric strategy is the implementation of Client Services Agent Profiles. The profiles are created in an effort for clients to "get to know" the service agent working on their accounts. The profiles include information such as professional experience, personal information and comments about working at Eagle Point. The client service agent profiles will be available on the Eagle Point website at www.eaglepoint.com. The CSA will be able to direct the client/prospect to the site, send a link to his or her personal profile, or mail a hard copy to the client.

Clients have also been provided a new online publication called Land Development Today "to help organizations achieve the benefits of technology by providing a mechanism to explore continuously evolving technology issues from many different angles," according to the press release announcing its launch in July. The publication focuses on land development technology issues, not on Eagle Point. Land Development Today includes current news, feature articles, interviews and opinions designed, written and submitted for surveyors, civil engineers, landscape architects and others involved in all aspects of land development projects. Particular emphasis is placed on today's technology issues.

And although Biver admits Eagle Point's efforts have focused more on civil engineering than surveying, he is committing Eagle Point's new goals to build a strong relationship with surveyors aimed at improving their ability to take full advantage of technological advances as they develop.

"We will provide them new capabilities in the field and in the office," Biver says. "We will be there for them when they install and set up their software. We will be accessible when they have questions. We will provide training. We will consult with them as to how to best leverage their solutions. We see all of these things as important roles that we can fill at various times for our clients."

If Eagle Point continues to soar as it has since 1983, you can bet the company will meet these goals for the land surveyor.