Ariel Benzakein

Experienced Technology Executive



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SUMMARY

I am an executive with nearly 20 years of experience leading client facing teams at technology companies. I am also an entrepreneur who has founded and exited two successful start-up companies. I have expert level knowledge in Project Management, Professional Services, Customer Success, and Technical Support.

SKILLS

- Leadership
- Team Building
- Mentoring & Guidance
- Program Management
- P&L Management
- Business Development
- Agile/SCRUM Methodologies
- Conflict Resolution
- Change Management

WORK EXPERIENCE

12/2015 - Present

Senior Director of Client Solutions

Experian

As the Senior Director of Client Solutions at Experian Data Quality, I am responsible for leading several client-facing teams; my team is currently close to 60 people, split between Boston and Costa Rica, and my reports are a mix of individual contributors, Senior Managers, and Director level managers. My teams include:

- Professional Services
- Technical Support
- Customer Success
- Renewals
- Sales Engineering
- Fulfillment (Sales Operations)
- Strategic Programs & Innovation

Some of my key achievements:

Professional Services:

- Grew Professional Services revenue from $5.7m in FY16 to $7.3m in FY18 while reducing staff from 13 to 7.
- Drove Customer Satisfaction with Professional Services from 70% to 100% (FY16-18).
- Drove Delivery Efficiency on Professional Services projects from 80% to 125%

Customer Success:

- Created the first Customer Success team corporate wide at Experian
- Piloted three scientific health measurement metrics: Churn Probability Score, Customer Maturity Model, and Customer Health Score that give insight into the real time state of the customer base and allow Experian teams to make sound decisions on where to spend their time.
- Drove gross retention on customers with an assigned Customer Success Manager from 85% to an average of 96%.
- Drove NPS scores from -6 (FY17) to 25 (FY18) and 54 (FY19).

Technical Support:

- Created a 24/7 Customer Support center in Costa Rica.
- Turned the Costa Rica support team into a Global Center of Excellence, supporting the North America, APAC, and EMA regions.
- Drove Customer Satisfaction with Technical Support from 75% to an average of 98%.
- Created a Concierge Support team in Boston to deliver a paid "white glove" support experience to Enterprise customers; generated over $1m in incremental recurring revenue in the first year.

Renewals (Account Management):

- Piloted a new Renewals Sales team in Costa Rica, initially targeting accounts $10,000 or less ARR and currently targeting accounts of $25,000 or less ARR (50% of the client base).
- Team has consistently hit a gross retention rate of 91% vs. the 85% average for the rest of the AM team.

Strategic Programs & Innovation:

- Created a Regional Innovation Center to drive new product innovation and create new integrations; team launched four new products in FY18
- Led the Operations (development and technical) workstream for the launch of a new product - Experian Instant Form Fill.

05/2013 - 12/2015

Director, Professional Services

PerkinElmer

As the Director of Professional Services at PerkinElmer Informatics, I led the project delivery team which was responsible for key enterprise software implementations at major pharmaceutical companies and laboratories in North America.

Some of my key achievements:

- Developed and implemented an Agile professional services methodology based on Scrum
- Directly managed key high visibility multi-million dollar projects
- Implemented best practice project management methodology

04/2011 - 05/2013

Director of Client Services

Kaon Interactive

At Kaon Interactive, I led the project delivery teams responsible for delivering high impact 3D product demonstrations and marketing briefs to enterprise clients. I led both the Project Management and 3D Modeler / Animation teams.

Some of my key achievements:

- Implemented a SaaS system for project management (Clarizen); created reports to show project profitability
- Implemented a process integrated with Salesforce.com for the creation of new projects
- Implemented best practice project management methodology & client engagement model
- Acted as Account Manager on Kaon's largest client, doubling direct revenue from that client in conjunction with the Sales Team

08/2008 - 03/2011

Senior Project Manager

ITA Software

As a Senior Project Manager in ITA's Implementation & Technical Services group, I led multi-million dollar software implementation and custom development projects for airlines, meta search companies, and online travel agencies. ITA was acquired by Google in March 2011 for over $700 million.

Some of my key achievements:

- I was the first project manager that ITA hired from the outside for Professional Services, and I was involved with creating new processes and procedures for the new Implementation group.
- I led successful implementations of ITA's QPX back end flight search software for: ANA, Alitalia, Hawaiian Airlines, Orbitz, GetThere, Hipmunk, Travelzoo (Fly.com) and many others.
- I led a major custom software development project to reverse engineer and replace legacy back end systems for American Airlines.

04/2004 - 08/2008

General Manager, Virtual Product Development Group

International TechneGroup Incorporated

At International TechneGroup Incorporated, I led one of the three major business units of the company and served on the executive leadership team. I was responsible for leading the Sales, Product Management, Professional Services, and Software Development groups for my business unit.

Some of my key achievements:

- Turned the Virtual Product Development group from an internal R&D and project support group into a customer facing profit center by applying ITI's proven CPPD product development methodology to software development
- Productized an internal tool used for managing projects (ITI ProjectView) and sold to external customers
- Led a major project with the US Navy (NAVSEA) to simulate fires on ships and train sailors to fight fires more effectively
- Created new models for outsourcing development work, such as Rural Outsourcing, leading to cost savings and increased quality and productivity

02/2000 - 03/2004

Various

SLICE Technologies

I held several positions at SLICE Technologies, the leading provider of software for the "Green Industry" (Landscape Contractors, Wholesale Nurseries, and Retail Garden Centers):

Account Executive, Central US Region, 2002 – 2004
Software Developer, 2001 – 2002
Technical Support / Client Trainer, 2000 – 2001

Some of my key achievements:

- Created PalmOS based software to manage nursery and garden center inventory, including barcode scanning of inventory during "counts"
- Created PalmOS based software to perform landscape estimates on-site
- During my first full year as an Account Executive, personally accounted for over 40% of the new business revenue for that year
- Traveled to customer sites to perform training as well as led training classes at SLICE's offices in Cincinnati for customers

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

09/2005 - 01/2007

Chief Operating Officer & Founder

ArielHost LLC

I founded and ran ArielHost LLC in 2005 as the first fully PCI Compliant web hosting solution for small businesses. It offered both dedicated server hosting and shared hosting services on BSD, Linux, and Windows operating systems, as well as VOIP services, web design, and merchant services. I sold the business in 2007 to Orc Webhosting of Switzerland.

Some of my key achievements:

- Business was profitable by the second month
- Obtained over 500 customers, mostly small to medium sized businesses
- Offered web design services, utilizing a network of contractors in Eastern Europe and Asia
- Created a hybrid on premise & outsourced customer support center with 24/7 customer support

01/1998 - 12/1999

Chief Executive Officer & Founder

Virtual Electronics, Inc.

I founded Virtual Electronics in 1998 as one of the first full service consumer electronics stores on the Internet. The business achieved seven figure revenue in its first year, and was sold to a competitor at the end of the second year.

Some of my key achievements:

- Business was profitable by the second year
- Developed my own code to manage inventory and process payments online
- Developed relationships with distributors to drop ship many items despite small order quantities
- Utilized a network of contractors to handle phone orders and support

CERTIFICATIONS

Certified ScrumMaster (CSM), July 2013 - Present

Taught directly by Dr. Jeff Sutherland, one of the inventors of Scrum, and Joe Justice, the head of Wikispeed and TEDx speaker.

PerkinElmer Global Manager Development Curriculum - July 2014

This is a year long course that PerkinElmer managers and executives take for leadership development

Experian Business Network - 2017-2018

This is a year long, highly selective Executive Leadership program for high potential Experian employees.

EDUCATION

1992 - 1996 St. John's College (Annapolis)

1988 - 1992 Cincinnati Country Day School