

Accounting Technology's  
**KILLER VARS**



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## STAYING FOCUSED MIKE SILVER

Mike Silver has the opportunity to serve a diverse customer base in the Chicago region. He doesn't do it.

"We have focused our business around project accounting," notes Silver, a CPA who also has a degree in computer science. "We turn away manufacturing deals. We turn away retail. The more focused we stay, the more deals we win. People don't want to come up against us in Chicago."

The result is that Microsoft has nominated the long-time Solomon software dealer for Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year, Central Region. It has been honored for Worldwide Solomon Excellence and was a finalist for the ERP Partner of the Year for Microsoft Business Solutions in 2003.

The company is a member of the Microsoft Project Management and Accounting Partner Advisory Council, and also of Microsoft's Small and Mid-market

Solutions & Partner Group Advisory Council.

Silver started out as a consultant at Computer Science Corp., but got fed up with being a project lead and system designer. He joined a small CPA firm in 1989, then bought it in 1999 to take the IT business out on its own.

Over the years, Omnios has sold accounting software from Macola, along with MAS 90, and still supports some MAS 90 sites. The company's relationship with Solomon goes back to 1993, when it was the first Solomon IV dealer in the Chicago area. Since then, Omnios has stuck with the line as Microsoft focused Solomon on project management.

That approach has led Omnios to do well with advertising agencies, public relations and market firms, and professional associations, along with tour and trade show management organizations. It also has about 30 racecar teams as clients, including Indianapolis 500 winner Bobby Rahal.

"Every race is a project," notes Silver. He adds that landing Rahal has helped Omnios attract other teams, especially Porsche Motor Sports.

Generally, the client companies targeted range from \$5 million to \$100 million in annual sales. The small public relations firms fall into the \$5 million arena, with some bigger advertising agencies in the \$80 million to \$90 million range. Associations span a low end of \$10 million to \$15 million and go up to \$40 million to \$50 million.

The market does not require a high degree of technical expertise as much as it does business process understanding. "It's the ability to get in and project management and set expectations, an understanding of cost accounting, project accounting, how rates are generated, and

how mark ups are taken," says Silver.

Focus also means that Omnios does not sell hardware or install networks. Nor does it have a development team. "We subcontract all of our development work, when there are enhancements and special needs," says Silver. "We strictly install, implement, and train on accounting software."

As with many companies, growth has not come from software license sales, which have been flat. However, service revenue is surging. Existing clients "are asking for more tools, Web applications, and OLAP technology," notes Silver.

Much of the opportunity is in delivering services that enable clients to get more out of the products they already own. "We are seeing a trend with people seeking to do more with existing software," says Silver.

The company has no plans for expansion outside of the Midwest, and Silver thinks that is an advantage in attracting quality consultants.

"We've tried to build a little bit of lifestyle," he says. In terms of locating job candidates, "We find them coming from big firms where there was a lot of traveling—here they are home with their families," he continues.

Silver has primarily hired experienced staff members, but would like to bring in some college graduates who can be trained in the Omnios method. He says that hiring those with one-to-two years of experience is often difficult.

"They come in with biases. They are always comparing what the product does to the way a competing product functions," says Silver. But no matter what the experience level, he believes that if good people come along, the company should hire them.

"We take them whether there is work or not," he says. ■

### Mike Silver

Omnios  
Buffalo Grove, Ill.  
Founded: 1989  
Sales: \$1.9 million (est.)  
Main products: Great Plains, Solomon  
[www.omnios.com](http://www.omnios.com)

