

GEMKO Information Group

"Celebrating 15 years and growing in a volatile industry"

GEMKO Partners



Mike Budzich (left), Terry Murphy (middle), and Mike Scalzo (right)

"We recognize that our long-term success is dependent on our ability to become more customer intimate by helping customers improve their business processes in order to resolve their business challenges, and increase revenue while decreasing inventories and operating costs."

*- F. Michael Scalzo, GEMKO
Managing Director & CEO.*



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The way we were...

GEMKO Information Group was founded and incorporated in 1991 as the computer-consulting arm for Gaines Kriner Elliot & Company, a Buffalo-based certified public accounting and consulting firm. GEMKO was formed in response to the increasing use and dependence on technology by the business world and specifically by the accounting firm's clients.

James C. Metzler, CPA, a partner with the accounting firm, had an early interest in technology and during the late 1970s wrote a time and billing practice management program. Computer consulting by CPA firms was a new concept and Metzler took it a step further by giving seminars on information technology. An IBM executive heard one of Metzler's seminars and retained him to present computer profitability seminars across the country for IBM.

By the early 1990s, it was evident to Metzler that computer consulting was a viable service and needed by businesses wanting to become more profitable and improve efficiency.

Although Metzler's computer consulting was tied directly to the accounting firm, he knew eventually it would need to stand on its own, to get away from the CPA mind-set. The accounting firm partners did not want CPAs who were responsible for computer consulting, a situation that creates part-time computer experts. GEMKO's formation in 1991 as a separate entity enabled it to attract high caliber information professionals and offer its management team ownership in the company

During its 12-year existence, GEMKO has redefined and transformed itself from a software products based company to one that's a value-added business solutions provider.

Terry Murphy, director of sales and marketing, joined GEMKO in 1992 and recalls at that time "the industry consisted of midrange and mainframe computers and the IT staff worked in a 'glass house'. Today, the technology is distributed to many platforms including Intel-based networks and the Internet, providing end users with many more IT tools to perform their activities. The speed of collaboration with supply chain partners, clients, vendors, agents, sales reps, etc. has created a definite demand for fast, online, 'right the first time' application transactions and data. I consider myself lucky to be involved in this era of tremendous change in the IT environment and definitely have derived satisfaction from the challenge of the change."

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Changing the way the market views GEMKO, from a software products company to a provider of business solutions that are enabled by technology, began with the arrival of Mike Scalzo in 1996 as GEMKO's managing director. His leadership and management skills helped re-define GEMKO and redirect its efforts to work toward common goals.

The other members of GEMKO's management team, Murphy and Mike Budzich, director of technical services, join him in this endeavor, overseeing 23 technical, sales/marketing, training and support personnel. Scalzo's first order of business was to involve his leadership team in developing and instituting good business processes for GEMKO in sales, solution delivery, customer support, strategic planning and human resources. "These processes provide guidelines for our staff on how to do business internally and with clients," Scalzo said. "They also bring clarity on how the required outcome needs to be achieved and provide structure for the process-driven culture we've adopted."

Incorporating these processes in the way GEMKO does business involves training and Scalzo arranged for intensive training to strengthen the staff's ability to communicate more effectively with clients and each other, become better skilled at the processes that are key to their business, and generally help them be more comfortable adopting and functioning with what may be new behavior.

The sales and marketing process under Murphy's direction is working well, Scalzo said, and added, "the process has helped us be more focused, our leads are more qualified and it has reduced our cycle time." Scalzo said once training for the solution delivery process is complete, it will guide GEMKO to effectively manage its implementation process and help deliver results clients expect. This means that GEMKO staff needs to know what questions need asking and who to ask in order to gather the proper information before recommending a solution. This can present a rather large learning curve for technical people who traditionally only were required to communicate with computers.

The way we will be...

Scalzo's goals for GEMKO are lofty and he isn't reluctant to admit that they haven't reached them yet, but he says, "we're getting close." His candor is evidence of his willingness to honestly assess the challenges and issues GEMKO faces, formulate a plan to address them, and remain focused during the plan's execution. Those, like Murphy and Budzich, who have been with GEMKO long enough to witness the company and staff's transformation, attest to Scalzo's leadership abilities and believe GEMKO will reach its goals. "GEMKO differentiates itself by the way we implement and support our product. The processes we use disciplines the user and GEMKO to work collaboratively," Scalzo said. "We recognize that our long-term success is dependent on our ability to become more customer intimate by helping customers improve their business processes in order to resolve their business challenges, and increase revenue while decreasing inventories and operating costs." "The methods and processes we continue to develop will provide us with a guide on what roles we need to play, what activities we need to execute, how we can be more collaborative and lead more effectively in order to deliver true value to our customer's bottom line. "We're almost there."

Another process that has been implemented and is successful is the customer support process, which provides customers with after market support, help desk assistance and value-added advisory and training services. The need for GEMKO to implement these processes became evident during a strategic planning process, which Scalzo said, "helped us take a look at what we need to do to position GEMKO so that we're able to solve customers' problems and add bottom line improvements."

The strategic planning process has helped GEMKO identify what it needs to do to develop a competitive advantage, while focusing on its vision/mission statement. "We're not reactive and don't operate with a "flavor of the day" mindset. Rather, we're process focused and as part of that focus we work toward being and remaining clear on who we are, what services we provide, why we provide those services and who we provide them for.

Under Scalzo's direction, GEMKO has limited its number of offerings in order to help staff become very skilled on a few rather than on a multitude. GEMKO's offerings include e-business for IBM midrange computers and in March 2000 received the designation IBM Advanced Solution Provider. In October 2000, GEMKO unveiled "Supply Chain Connection," providing users with a connection to the Internet and allowing them to push critical business information, such as order status, expected delivery dates and account information, out to a secured web site. Pushing this information out frees a business' internal resources and allows account managers to be more proactive in customer care.

GEMKO also offers Navision software package for NT and became qualified in January 1997 to be a Navision Solution Center, offering a user help line. All of the GEMKO staff working on the NT platform have been trained and certified by Navision. GEMKO has received several awards from Navision, including a top performance award given to the top 15 Navision Solution Centers in the U.S. and an award for having the most dynamic growth in a year.