

Philadelphia Business Journal - January 12, 2004

<http://philadelphia.bizjournals.com/philadelphia/stories/2004/01/12/newscolumn4.html>



## INDUSTRY WRAPUPS

From the January 9, 2004 print edition

### Tech

## CEO had to re-invent; now he helps others

Peter Key

OmniChoice Inc. was established at the height of the Internet bubble to run a Web site that enabled consumers to find the providers of such things as phone service, Internet access and power that best suited their needs.

That, however, failed to prove profitable, so Scott Snyder, the chief executive officer of the Norristown-based company, repositioned OmniChoice. Instead of making its technology available directly to consumers, OmniChoice began selling it to providers, such as wireless carriers, who used it to help their customers pick a service plan.

The repositioning was successful enough to get OmniChoice to the point that it was generating revenue at a rate of about \$1.7 million annually. It also enabled OmniChoice to become attractive enough to get bought for an undisclosed sum by a similar company, CallVision Inc. of Seattle, in October.

Still, Snyder attributes his success in keeping OmniChoice afloat to being able to find a new market for its technology when he was forced to, not to having a back-up plan, or several, in case OmniChoice's original strategy failed.

"I was extremely guilty of not framing our strategy, or thinking, in multiple ways of the forces that could affect our business," he said.

Snyder thinks a lot of leaders of young, growing companies do the same thing. Which is why he thinks there is a market among those types of companies for the services that his new employer provides.

That new employer is Decision Strategies International Inc., a West Conshohocken-based management consulting and training firm that specializes in helping clients learn to deal with, and even profit from, uncertainty.

DSI was founded in 1990 by Paul J. H. Schoemaker, a former professor in the University of Chicago's Graduate School of Business and research director of the Mack Center for Technological Innovation at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business.

Schoemaker is the brother of Hubert J.P. Schoemaker, founder of Centocor Inc., one of the region's first biotech companies, which is now a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson Inc. He was an investor in OmniChoice and, after that was sold, asked Snyder to come to DSI and put the company on a rapid growth track.

DSI basically gets clients to imagine several likely futures instead of just one, plan for them all and implement a strategy that can be modified so that it can work with a number of them. An example of that, Snyder said, would be Christopher Columbus envisioning that he might land in a place with a cold climate instead of a place with a warm one and so packing his ships with several carts that could be reconfigured as sleds.

DSI has worked with businesses, nonprofits and government agencies of all sizes, but its most notable customers have been large ones, such as Microsoft Corp., the Coca-Cola Co. and the Food and Drug Administration. It would like to expand by coming up with a scaled-down version of its services for smaller organizations and by developing software that its customers can use to help formulate strategies and monitor their implementation. The former would enable DSI to expand its client base, while the second would give it more of a recurring revenue stream, said Snyder, who was brought in to help it do both.

"Our long-term plans are to grow substantially in terms of both the top and the bottom lines," he said.

DSI employs eight and doesn't reveal its revenue. Snyder said it would like to start its growth by doubling in size by both measures this year and "keeping that kind of trend up."

That may sound optimistic, but given the company's expertise, Snyder's knowledge of the market it's targeting and the demand for planning for uncertainty in a post-9/11 world, Snyder said it's doable.

"That looks very realistic at this point," he said.