



Trust X Alliance Member Q&A

Ben Gower, CEO, Perspicuity

Sixteen years ago, CEO Ben Gower founded Perspicuity with an eye toward building a new type of IT services model. In just two years, his company grew from six customers to 2,000. More recently, Gower has worked to “productize” the company’s services as more clients move to the cloud.

Start at the beginning, when and why did you start your business?

My business partner and I were both in IT—I was with Xerox, and he was at an insurance company. I was fed up with corporate life and thought I had something to offer, so in 2002 we started Perspicuity. Back then, we were consultants charging a day rate for engagements. Today, it’s completely different. We’re managed services specialists, and we sell services on a fixed-fee basis. About 70% of our business is through partnerships with VARs and other consulting organizations.

What are your customers’ most common needs? How have you seen that evolve in the last few years?

They want to take advantage of the cloud. They get the model, but they don’t know how to leverage “cloud economics.” It’s taken a long time to come up with packaged deployments that customers are willing to pay for, and at a level where we can make a decent margin.

If you could go back, what would you do differently with the business and why?

We’ve learned things along the way, but we should have done it quicker. In retrospect, it’s not difficult to work out, but it seemed so at the time.

When we launched the first packaged service around the cloud, it was a big moment because the customer—for a modest fee—could see what they’d get and what the result would be. The focus was on delivering the outcome for a fixed fee. Before the launch, if one of our consultants ran into problems, it made the price go up, and customers hated that. Now, we’re moving customers to the cloud, charging them “X” dollars, and “X” stays consistent. People love that.

To change, we had to examine what a consultant did to create a successful migration, productize that and then create a scalable delivery method. We spent the last six years re-evaluating how we do business. Now, we’re pretty good at taking a product, understanding

it from a technical perspective and getting to the crux of the matter with customers. It's obvious customers want to be secure, so we build a portal, documentation and offerings around the apparent things, and save our consulting services for the real nuances and differentiators within each customer's business.

In the old model, you needed highly paid, skilled and experienced consultants. In the new world, you need people-facing consultants operating within specific parameters.

With so much emphasis on the customer experience, what are customers looking for in and from a technology business advisor such as you?

They know the "why," but they also want to know the "how" in detail. Technology presents itself in an easy-to-consume way, but they get frustrated with making it business-ready. We have to be good at understanding the situation and helping them get what they need. The days of deep whiteboarding and talking about feelings are over.

How has your company's role changed over the years?

We have to commoditize anything that can have a process around it. It's a tough business. Even in consulting, you're running a guided process. It's more like buying a cell phone. How much data do you use? Do you need insurance protection? It's unnatural for a human with expertise, experience and skills to dismantle that and put it together for a person with fewer skills to manage.

What's your company doing to stay ahead of technology trends and business model shifts?

We have to challenge business models. Customers respect working with a progressive company; they appreciate the effort of making the experience better and less risky. And if someone doesn't, we shouldn't be working with them.

What's your approach to using technology within your own business and how does that help you better serve your customers?

We've always used the stuff we sell. Things are moving so fast; we made a strategic decision to build in-house first.

How has Trust X Alliance positively impacted your business?

The first layer is having an environment to express ideas outside your company and getting third-party affirmation. From a U.K. perspective, we have opportunities to work with partners and sell services all over the world. Twenty-five percent of our business comes through Trust X partnerships. We have all of our teams communicating across the alliance peer levels. Relationships with vendors are vital, too. It's an opportunity to engage with vendors at a higher level.

What has surprised you most about being part of Trust X Alliance?

How something that initially seemed so weird—our biggest competitor was sitting next to me at a meeting—has become an integral part of our business. Also, we've met people running businesses we didn't think were relevant to ours, and now we're trading together on a frequent basis.

Just a few more details:

Percentage of growth, 2016 to 2017 21%

Headquarters London

Reach Global

Number of office locations 1

Best business advice ever received

Best business advice ever: The one-page strategic plan by Verne Harnish. It sets boundaries for how to operate your business and distill your goals. Two years ago, we got that from a Trust X Alliance meeting, and today we have a more consistently performing business—with fewer peaks and troughs—as a result. Everyone within our company knows what we’re doing, and why we’re doing it.

Little known fact about your company: “Perspicuity” means “clear.”

Perspicuity: www.perspicuity.co.uk/

Social sites:

