BUILDING ON SUCCESS WHILE STARTING FRESH

Nexign, the first company to create BSS software in Russia and the CIS, plans on coming to the Middle East. **Loukas Tzitzis,** chief products and marketing officer, discusses what the journey for the company formerly known as **"Peter-Service"** has been – and what might come next.

Twenty-six years is a long time for anything; after all, a large portion of the world's population wasn't even alive 26 years ago. And when we're talking about the telecommunications industry – and, more specifically, business support systems (BSS) – then that's an impressive feat indeed.

But that's how long Nexign (pronounced "Nex-sign") has been around. "We're not a new kid on the block," says Loukas Tzitzis, chief products and marketing officer.

He's not kidding: Nexign has the distinction of being the first company to create BSS software in Russia and the CIS. Back then, it was known as "Peter-Service," an homage to its roots in the Russian city of Saint Petersburg.

Naturally, such a long lifespan means they know a bit about how to succeed in business. According to Tzitzis, one of the company's core values is fostering a partnership with clients. "There's partnership as a buzzword, and there's really being partners."

That idea of partnership appears to be paying off: to date, the company has under its belt more than 120 successful projects with more than 50 telecom providers (including MegaFon, MTS, Vodafone and more), and is present in 14 countries. Oh, and Tzitzis says this: "We have been growing steadily, and for last three years, we have exceeded US$100 million revenue per year."

But just because it's been successful in the past and present doesn't mean it's time to let up on the proverbial gas, Tzitzis says. "The BSS market is evolving. You can never rest on your laurels."

Tzitzis says the changing BSS market means companies need to adapt to survive. "We have entered a phase where BSS has totally changed and has had to adapt. This is not only about differentiation on the product functionality or the service functionality. You need to compete and win on non-functional business aspects."

This, Tzitzis says, is especially important when customers "want what they want, how they want, and when they want." BSS, Tzitzis says, consequently needs to drive better customer experiences – something especially important when considering BSS contracts with operators are often more than five years in length ("operators do not take these contracts lightly," explains Tzitzis).

That long track record of success, and a proven ability to adapt (a microcosm of that: the Nexign rebrand was unveiled at Mobile World Congress in February this past year, along with a fresh logo and colour scheme), help position Nexign well for its next big thing: expansion into the Middle East market.

Tzitzis is quick to point out that it's a market Nexign does not plan exiting. "We are here to stay in the Middle East and Africa."

Naturally, they've also done their homework. The Middle East, Tzitzis says, is a competitive one – but one in which Nexign is well-positioned to compete in based on differentiation. "We know how advanced the Middle East market is."

The level of involvement and sponsorship from the very highest levels of government, and the amount of innovation taking place, are a couple of things that make the Middle East a very advanced market, Tzitzis says. And then there are merging technologies – and the speed at which they are being not only adopted, but adopted at large scale, in the Middle East.

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Tzitzis is frank in his assessment. "I think the Middle East is going to be a world leader in terms of adoption of things like 5G and blockchain. There is a business climate and a drive towards the next generation."

He adds such technologies will "radically reshape the landscape" for the entire telecommunications industry – and really technology as a whole, and how we interact with and harness technology.

Presently, Tzitzis says Nexign is set to open an office in Dubai – for which they will hire Emirati talent as part of the UAE's Emiratisation initiatives. He adds there is other news regarding Nexign in the region they hope to be able to announce "soon."

But no matter what the future has in store, it's fair to say Nexign has established a solid foundation to meet the challenges and adapt to change while forging the partnerships necessary to not just survive, but thrive. Says Tzitzis: "Our core competencies and sustainable advantages have put us in place for advantages in the marketplace. We're very happy with the reaction of clients towards the new brand. We believe that's the right way to the future."