

## First National Technology Solutions focuses on new security capabilities

by Michelle Leach

On the heels of its new mobile app, First National Technology Solutions is identifying new products and services to help client organizations operate more efficiently while boosting proactive, security-oriented capabilities.

"We want our clients to take advantage of those tools at a fraction of the cost of what it would be if they were to deploy it themselves,"

said Kim Whittaker, vice president of sales and support.

Founded as First Technology Solutions in 1996, the wholly-owned subsidiary of First National Nebraska Inc. is based out of FNB Tower and provides hosted and remote managed services to customers nationwide (co-location, applications and IT strategy, and day-to-day admin-

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**Vice President of Sales and Support Kim Whittaker and Vice President and Chief Technology Officer James O'Neil ... Leveraging diverse skill sets, certifications, consultative approach to build solutions that enhance clients' operations.**

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istration of systems, storage, network and backup infrastructure).

FNTS Portal has been a focus for the latter part of 2015, going into 2016, according to Whittaker and Vice President/Chief Technology Officer, James O'Neil.

"We had about nine dedicated people ... who spent 100 percent of their time on [the app] for seven months," O'Neil said.

Acknowledging the end-user's underestimation of the behind-the-scenes efforts that go toward the development of such solutions, O'Neil underscored the back-end complexity required to merge different systems and functionalities.

On-the-go, from one's mobile device, the user is able to open, update and close ticket requests, check the status of any server (and its utilization info), reset one's SDM password (without contacting the command center), and receive alerts. A new addition: the self-provisioning of virtual servers.

"We had looked at a lot of out-of-the-box solutions that could get us close to the functionality we were trying to achieve," O'Neil said.

Ultimately, no out-of-the-box solution provided such functionality.

FNTS, which has 85 employees, was reportedly able to leverage unique and diverse skill sets to build the desired solution from scratch.

"We had the experience on staff to build the interface," he said, adding it was able to take all the data and code into one database.

O'Neil also referenced another differentiator, its certification in Apache Cassandra, a NoSQL big data-type platform.

"That skillset is unique to the market," he said.

In this vein, O'Neil noted some out-of-the-box vendors may spring from large vendors and be good at one item FNTS wanted to check off of its list — such as provisioning or monitoring or ticketing — but not all three.

"That's why we felt internally the best thing to do was a full, custom application

written from the ground up," he said.

Whittaker characterized this application as an "all-in-one" on a single interface, with everything needed to support each environment.

## First National Technology Solutions

Phone: 877-435-7178 (command center)

Address: 1620 Dodge St., Stop Code 1073, Omaha 68197

Services: hosted and remote managed services

Founded: 1996 as First Technology Solutions

Goals: Focus on adding proactive, security capabilities.

Industry outlook: Driven by convergence of demand from many sides — not limited to mobile, cloud, business case/need to harness operational efficiencies.

Website: [www.fnts.com](http://www.fnts.com)

"In the planning phases, we engaged a handful of clients to get their input — those customers that had shown interest in these additional features," she said.

They solicited preferences for the type of data to be integrated into the app, and what was most important to these clients.

"We took that feedback into serious consideration," she said.

They described the challenge of not having "a lot of real estate to work with," so only the most relevant info was selected for the likes of dashboards, and so one wouldn't have to go through multiple screens to get to their data.

Initial testing was also used to determine if extra communication or training was needed.

Early feedback has lauded the tools' functionality, ease of day-to-day administration, and an easy-to-navigate and uncluttered interface.

Going forward, O'Neil said the engineers are working through a "wish list" of 25 to 30 additional items to add.

The firm is starting to develop a Web version that can be used on one's desktop, which was characterized as "Feedback No. 1."

Aside from partnering so clients can focus on respective businesses, they highlighted another distinguishing factor: Unlike other firms, it does not have a niche exclusively in banking or data apps. Instead, it mobilizes development folks around core business solutions.

From a staffing perspective, it works with Omaha-based CRi and Whittaker said FNTS is always looking for IT talent as it grows.

"Beyond strong technical talent, we also require very strong interpersonal skills," she said.

Due to its consultative approach, Whittaker acknowledged it can be more challenging to secure talent with the desired mix of skills.