



Dominating Digital Disruptions

To wade through the wake of technological disruption, Burns & McDonnell launched 1898 & Co., a business, technology and security solutions consultancy, in October 2019. With Chris Underwood as vice president and general manager, the team is tapping into 120 years of comprehensive experience in complex industries to deliver strategic, data-driven insights to help clients succeed during an era of rapid change. “Because,” 1898 & Co. promises, “the future won’t wait.”

Q HOW IS TECHNOLOGY AFFECTING THE WAY INDUSTRIES TACKLE EVOLVING CUSTOMER NEEDS?

A Technological advancements are motivating businesses to rethink traditional business models to better serve their customers and stay relevant in the marketplace. Consumers have a louder voice today than ever before, something technology has enabled in this digital age, and that has put the onus on businesses to respond to stakeholders’ demands. This evolution has spurred the need for what 1898 & Co. was created to provide: a holistic set of solutions that helps clients leverage technology to optimize their business, all while managing their risk.

Q AS CLIENTS WORK TOWARD A DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, WHERE DO YOU SEE THE BIGGEST GAP IN SERVICE?

A What we hear most often from our clients is that the consultants they brought in to help with any number of initiatives don’t fully understand their business or possess the technical aptitude to consult at a deeper level. We can fill this market gap because we couple our consultants with comprehensive knowledge in engineering, architecture and construction services, and industrial systems. As a result, we are able to provide clients with advice and strategies rooted in technical realities and give them confidence in the process and outcome. We’re also mindful of implementing technology solutions that won’t lock customers into debt or vendor restrictions as they look to progress within this digital environment.

Q WHAT EXACTLY DO DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND BUSINESS OPTIMIZATION MEAN FOR CLIENTS?

A Thanks to advances in computing power and speed of information, there is more data at our fingertips today than ever before. Unlocking this data creates enormous opportunity, such as the ability to better understand asset criticality and condition to prioritize capital asset planning and investments. Getting the data out from its silos and organizing it in a way that makes sense to ultimately drive more business efficiencies can benefit our clients greatly. But there has to be an underlying business objective; businesses don’t just transform for the sake of transformation.

Q IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD, HOW CAN OWNERS AND OPERATORS SECURE THEIR MOST VALUABLE ASSETS?

A As organizations move from on-premise software to the cloud, there are a lot of security challenges that must be considered at the enterprise level. Additionally, from an operational technology perspective, our clients’ deployment of more and more connected field devices can create new and unforeseen vulnerabilities.

Our security consulting professionals take a holistic approach when evaluating a client’s overall security posture. We start by developing a comprehensive security road map and strategy, considering all risks, as well as regulatory components and compliance requirements. We use the road map to inform our recommended solution and implement the right one to monitor potential threats and define incident response protocols, helping keep the most critical infrastructure safe and secure.

Q HOW IS 1898 & CO. SET UP TO EVOLVE WITH FUTURE DEMANDS AND INNOVATION?

A I believe organizations should constantly be looking at market dynamics and forecasts for inspiration on how to disrupt themselves, stay ahead of the game and be prepared to make necessary improvements. That’s why we are continuously asking ourselves how we can bring automated options to clients so they can mobilize cost-effective solutions. Looking to the future, many traditional services will be automated to some extent. While we’ll continue to lean on our fundamental understanding of engineering and construction disciplines, we’ll increasingly blend technical capabilities with consultative practices to give clients an advantage during the next wave of innovation. ●



WANT TO HEAR THE STORY BEHIND THE NAME? HINT: IT’S MORE THAN A NUMBER.

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