

## Executive Spotlight with Russ Wright



**Russ Wright**

*CEO*

Dimensions International



In the 05/11/2006 edition of ExecutiveBiz we had a chance to catch up with **Russ Wright**, CEO of **Dimensions International**

Dimensions International is a family-owned business. After graduating from college, Russ Wright joined Dimensions and has since worked his way up to CEO. The company now has 1,300 employees of revenues close to \$170 million.

In an exclusive interview, we discuss his background, if he is looking for another acquisition and his biggest challenge he had to overcome as CEO.

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**ExecutiveBiz: Tell us about your background and how you got to where you are today?**

**Russ Wright:** I started with DI when I was 21 right out of college, started working with accounts payable, moved from there to payroll and other parts of accounting, and from there, I transitioned my way to contracts. At some point during that whole process, I did some program management. From there, I moved to quality assurance. The company at the time, in 1996, started looking into ISO 9000, so I went about getting the company ISO certified. I held a number of different jobs at the company before becoming Executive Vice President. At that point, and getting DI company ISO certified, I then became Executive Vice President and began to run the day to day operations of the business. From that perspective, I learned the business from the inside out. I acquired knowledge in every facet of the business as to make myself prepared and well suited to eventually take over the helm when the time was right.

**ExecutiveBiz: What led to you actually taking over?**

**Russ Wright:** My father just made the decision one day. He said, "I'm ready to turn the company over to you." So I think it was a combination of probably him thinking I was ready

and him thinking it was time.

**ExecutiveBiz: How big is your company in terms of employees and revenue?**

*Russ Wright:* About 1,300 employees and we've got revenues of about \$170 million.

**ExecutiveBiz: Who are your customers?**

*Russ Wright:* Primary customers are DOD, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force. We also have the FAA USAID and government agencies of the like.

**ExecutiveBiz: What does the future hold for the company?**

*Russ Wright:* I think the future is very bright for DI. We consider ourselves still a very young business. I took over the business starting in 2003 so we consider ourselves starting again under my leadership but still young and very aggressive in the marketplace. We're competing against larger companies and continuing to learn and find our way with each experience. I believe DI's future's very bright. I believe DI has essential services and will contribute significantly.

**ExecutiveBiz: What's your unique approach for winning business against larger SI out there?**

*Russ Wright:* About the only approach I have is to be exceedingly aggressive in terms of marketing potential customers. I remain in the forefront and stare in their face. I travel a consistently to stay very close to my customers, listen to their concerns and their needs. It's the only way you can gain somebody's trust and really get to know them and understand their vision when you've got millions of dollars involved running programs. Once I understand their needs, it's then my responsibility to bring their vision and to fruition. I show them that even though Dimensions International is not a huge company, we have a lot of bandwidth and are as dedicated and committed to providing superior service and delivering excellent product.

**ExecutiveBiz: What are some challenges you are facing in terms of recruiting IT professionals to work for your company?**

*Russ Wright:* There's a huge demand for IT professionals out there. We try to offer the fact that we are a smaller company. There's a lot that you can also learn without being stone-piped like maybe with some other businesses. We offer the opportunity for advancement, tuition reimbursement, employee stock, additional training, and things of that nature. Plus we keep it kind of loosey-goosey around here and by making it a relaxed atmosphere in which to work. We kind of just try to keep it fun.

**ExecutiveBiz: Are you looking to acquire any companies in the near future?**

*Russ Wright:* We've done one acquisition, SENTEL, and we'd love to acquire another business. It's just finding the right company now.

**ExecutiveBiz: What's the most important thing you look for in an acquisition?**

*Russ Wright:* I'm looking for synergy between DI and another company. I'm looking for new customers to introduce Dimensions International to.

**ExecutiveBiz:** What would you say your leadership style is?

*Russ Wright:* I don't take myself as seriously albeit I'm serious about the business. I'm just like a regular ol' person. I put my pants on just like everybody else every day. I have my issues just like everybody else though. I'm not your conventional CEO. I don't manage that way. We try to see each other like family. Everyone makes mistakes from time to time, and from that perspective, we just try to be better and get better from our space.

**ExecutiveBiz:** What would you say your biggest obstacle was business wise that you had to overcome and how did you overcome it?

*Russ Wright:* Probably integrating SENTEL That was DI's first acquisition we had to do. Many of us had not done an acquisition before, so we tried to bring two companies together as painlessly and effortlessly as possible.

**ExecutiveBiz:** What advice would you give to the CEO of a smaller government contracting company that you wish you knew before you got into the business?

*Russ Wright:* Probably it would be to keep the competition close. Don't think that they're not aware of your existence, that you're small and flying under the radar. They're aware of you and they're watching! There's a lot of work out there for a lot of us to go after. It's not as though there's a lack of government work, so don't delude yourself that the competition isn't paying more attention than you would think. Therefore, you need to be aware and pay attention to them.

**ExecutiveBiz:** What is something most people don't know about you?

*Russ Wright:* As much traveling as I do, and I do a lot of traveling... I hate to fly.

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For more information about Russ Wright and Dimensions International, visit [www.dimenintl.com](http://www.dimenintl.com).

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*Interview with Russ Wright conducted by JD Kathuria.*

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