

# SOFTWARE ENGINEERING PROFESSIONALS

*Building innovative software solutions*

Probably the most defining testament to the quality of services provided by Software Engineering Professionals (SEP) is the fact that they have become successful partners to several *Fortune 500* and *Forbes Global 2000* clients. These leaders of business and industry have learned the advantages of trusting SEP professionals to provide

innovative and high-value solutions to their needs, both in the software they create and in the methods they use to develop it. SEP clients rely on the company's wide variety of services, including product discovery and planning, prototyping, software system development, engineering support, and system verification, that are capable of supporting entire project lifecycles or providing support for specific project stages.

## A LEAN AND EFFICIENT BUSINESS MODEL

Jeff Gilbert, President and co-founder of SEP, brought with him a BS degree in Mechanical Engineering when he and like-minded engineers launched SEP in 1988. Their goal was to create not just a software engineering company, but an overall business environment where they truly wanted to work. At SEP, engineers would work directly with their clients instead of filtering project parameters through a sales staff. Realizing that this was a unique

and untried approach, Gilbert and his colleagues were not sure that the concept would succeed. In fact, they continue to refer to it today as "an experiment that escaped from the lab."

"Our goal was to create a company that would do more than just make money," Gilbert admits. "We were passionate about providing exceptional products and services to a select clientele. We believed that success would follow if we followed that goal."

The "experiment" launched more than two decades ago has proved to be highly successful. Today, more than 23 years after SEP was launched, the environment they chose to create continues to thrive under Gilbert's leadership along with strict adherence to the values and ideals that guided their business at its inception. The leaders of the firm's engineering and operational management teams understand the work their teams are doing because they are highly skilled technical people themselves.

Working on software in healthcare and automotive products in the early 1990s, SEP has transitioned along with market demand. Their primary industries now include aerospace, medical, healthcare, and energy, all critical in nature that require a high level of diligence. These projects often solve complex business problems and have the potential to save lives.

## QUIET SUCCESS

While SEP is located in the heart of Carmel's City Center, Gilbert is not surprised that many of his corporate neighbors are not aware of what SEP actually does. "We've grown consistently, but quietly over the years," he relates, "with a very healthy 18 percent growth rate."

SEP operates successfully in this highly competitive arena by offering numerous technology platforms tailored to meet the specific needs of each client. In addition to having substantial professional experience with all mainstream technologies, the firm's engineers are also adept at working with newly developing proprietary systems. Each is designed to provide end-to-end business solutions that help the client's project get started correctly and meet the overarching business goal.

SEP project managers and their teams begin by ascertaining a thorough understanding of the client's vision and specific needs to properly align the team's focus. They then proceed with developing professional recommendations and alternatives with unprecedented visibility and transparency in the client's project. These include real cost drivers for the project, leading edge metrics for status, the trade-offs associated with change requests, and



SEP moved into its new corporate headquarters in January of 2011.

—all photos by Bram Photography



frequent chances to review work products well before the final delivery date.

At SEP, employees are challenged, appreciated, and supported. The company's managers and engineers thrive on challenging projects and continuous learning. In addition to working in an environment where employees focus on providing exceptional services to their clients, they are also intent on taking care of each other. SEP's Career Path and Professional Development systems provide a formalized approach to focusing employee development in ways that support the company's vision. The result is an employee retention rate of better than 95 percent, especially impressive in an industry known for high turnover rates.

In addition, SEP's carefully filtered hiring process ensures that only the highest qualified job applicants, carefully screened to meet the company's standards, are welcomed aboard to thrive in SEP's work environment. That process has been so successful that after more than two decades in business, the company operates today in an efficient and streamlined manner with just under 90 employees, yet is more effective and productive than competitors of much larger size.

In April, 2010, Gilbert and the other owners of SEP sold their shares of the company to SEP's employees making it an ESOP (Employee Stock Ownership Plan). Now 100 percent employee owned, SEP is one of only 11,500 ESOPs in the United States. "We have been very fortunate to have created a true family atmosphere at SEP where each of our employees has a stake in our company and, thereby, in our community," Gilbert points out.

SEP relocated its headquarters to be close to the action in downtown Carmel. This location allows SEP, both as a company and as individuals, to participate in the numerous community activities that help make Carmel the place it is.

"SEP knew that we would not only attract new talent, but allow our current employees to enjoy coming to work being surrounded by the vibrancy of the growing City Center location," said Gilbert. "We are excited to be part of the successful redevelopment and growth of the city."

