



Asheesh Mehra

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to boarding the entrepreneurial ship, Asheesh Mehra headed Infosys BPO—Asia Pacific, Japan and the Middle East. His experience over 20 years has also spanned across leadership roles in large ITeS organizations, such as Mphasis, TCS and WNS, having worked extensively across the UK and the United States. His achievements were recognized by the highly acclaimed Shared Services & Outsourcing Network (SSON), which presented him with the IDC Digital Disruptor of the Year award 2017, “People’s Choice for Personal Contribution to Industry—APAC” award in 2011 and the “Thought Leader of the Year—Asia” award in 2010.

COMPANY BRIEF AntWorks™ (*ant.works*) is a global artificial intelligence and intelligent automation company, creating new possibilities with data through digitization, automation and enterprise intelligence. As the world’s first and only Integrated Automation Platform (IAP) powered by fractal science principles and pattern recognition that understands every data type, ANTstein™ SQUARE digitizes every piece of information for a diverse range of industries. Harnessing Data Curation and Digital Workforce Management in a unique low-code/no-code environment, ANTstein SQUARE innovates far beyond traditional RPA to automate complex processes and provide Straight-through Processing. AntWorks’ solutions power up enterprises with accurate insights through an integrated, intelligent, technology stack that automates and learns independently.

What was the vision for creating AntWorks?

When we started out four years ago, my co-founder and I came from a business process background. We decided that we were not going to look at solving automation challenges from a technology perspective, but rather from a business process perspective. We knew very clearly that we wanted to be a product company and not a services company. Additionally, when we looked at what was happening in the marketplace, we realized that data, and more specifically clean data, was going to be the most critical component in an automation journey for any business process.

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An Interview with Asheesh Mehra, Co-Founder and Group CEO, AntWorks

When I say business process, it could be processing a claim, invoice, mortgage or title search, whatever the business process is, from soup to nuts. We looked at it from end-to-end. Using our relationships globally, we sat in front of about 140 C-Suite executives and asked them what they were looking to solve and whether the technology tools they were using today solved those issues.

We collated all that feedback and went to the drawing board and drew up our product architecture. We consolidated the voice of the customer/user and designed our product architecture.

We created ANTstein, the platform, which has a data ingestion engine, a data transport engine, and has the intelligence of machine learning running through the entire platform. It’s learning from the very second you start interacting with the platform. It’s self-learning and it’s also learning from an adaptive perspective.

When we looked at the business process, we saw that different business processes require different capabilities, so we pulled together a bouquet of technologies, all proprietary, built by AntWorks. We don’t use any open source products in the entire platform because we wanted to own the IP of the product. We made a very small acquisition in 2016 to help us accelerate that journey, and then went out and executed against the product architecture that we laid out for ourselves.

How broad is the target market for AntWorks?

Today, if you look at our client landscape, it is banking, financial services, insurance, mortgage, telecom, retail, legal, education, as well as some government. Given we’re a relatively young company, it’s more common for government organizations to be mandated towards much older, more established brands, however despite this we already do some government work and we anticipate this sector will grow for us as the brand matures. Logistics is also pretty big for us, so we’re really cutting across the full spectrum of vertical sectors because our technology toolset is agnostic to industry.

Our footprint of clients is completely global. If I slice up the world into three broad buckets, North and South America, Europe and the Middle East, and Asia Pacific, then North and South America is about 45 percent of our business. Next would come Asia Pacific followed by EMEA which is being ramped up right now.

How critical is cultural fit when hiring new talent?

Cultural fit is beyond critical to our business. For me personally, culture trumps skillset. Skills

you can learn, but if you are not cut from the same cloth, it is difficult to change an individual and we don’t want to change people. We want to make sure that people fit naturally into our culture.

How will the platform evolve in order to stay relevant in a fast-changing world?

In our opinion, we’re about 18 months ahead of the marketplace from a technology perspective and we want to always make sure that we stay there. So R&D and product development and enhancement continues to be a priority within the AntWorks organization. All of the versions of our platform ANTstein™ are names after shapes, in recognition of pattern-based fractal science, which the product is powered by. First, we began with TRIANGLE, and more recently we launched SQUARE. Next year the product will be upgraded to PENTAGON and then HEXAGON and so on.

Our mantra is always to stay several steps ahead of the competition and the rest of the automation landscape. We had a great head start by spotting early that integrated automation was always going to be an essential piece of the puzzle. Skipping the stage of building only traditional standalone RPA gave us a distinct advantage over the competition. Now, it’s our job to stay there by constantly upgrading the platform and its capabilities.

Is it difficult to forecast for the business with the rapid pace of change?

I can’t tell you what’s going to happen in 150 days from now because it is changing very rapidly. We’re taking two quarters at a time. We’re trying to work towards half-year plans. Working to a quarterly plan is important, but it’s too short a period of time because even if you had to go and change technology or add capability, it takes time to do that, especially putting it through testing.

Are you able to enjoy the process and reflect on what you have built?

We celebrate wins. I’m a big believer in celebrating, in giving people kudos like we did when we recently closed a big deal. When the sales executive went home there was a bottle of champagne at his doorstep. It was not given to him in the office, but at his doorstep, because we believe hugely in the importance of family at AntWorks. Every one of us have families who become invested in our professional lives in some way or form. It’s important that they be included to celebrate in the highs.

For me, as the Co-founder and the CEO of the company, I have to make sure that I keep to my promise that I’ve made to my people that they will have fun along the way, and that I will create wealth for them. That’s what I’m trying to do. ●