

MRNUSA

MINORITY BUSINESS NEWS

A portrait of Eric Ellis, a man with glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and blue striped tie. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background behind him is a technical architectural drawing with various lines and numbers.

AECsoft

patents innovative
supply chain solutions

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DEVELOPMENT CORP.**

**Ernst & Young
Entrepreneur of the
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**Gail Warrior-
Lawrence,
Warrior Group**

AECsoft scores big

MBE patents next generation of global sourcing technology

By Peter Fretty

Considering the number of patents that technology powerhouses like Apple, Google, IBM or Microsoft receive each year, it is easy to overlook the significance of the achievements. However, when a minority-owned technology firm achieves such a major breakthrough, that triumph speaks. After all, applying for and actually receiving a patent goes well beyond the initial invention – it takes determination, dedication, extensive resources as well as a thorough understanding of the marketplace.

Having just received his first patent in July 2009, Tom Ren, chief technology officer of Houston-based AECsoft USA Inc. truly appreciates the complex process. Having applied and then abandoned a patent pursuit in 2000, Ren decided to apply for another patent in 2005, starting with a provisional patent application, and ultimately filing a formal petition in 2006. Soon after, Ren's application went through lengthy due diligence process by patent examiners, followed by a multistep proving process.

"It was a long road, but well worth the investment of time and resources. Having gone through the application process once before, we had a good feel for what to anticipate and how the process works. Ultimately, we used our past experience to prepare ourselves for the journey," Ren said. "Over the years, we found that some of our competitors have been learning and copying from us again and again. Now, we can safely provide the next generation of supplier management solution to our customers and prevent our competitors from copying our processes. This patent award plays a significant role in solidifying our position as the industry's leading supplier management solution."



Tom Ren

Patent particulars

Ren's patent is for a method of scoring and automatically qualifying search results based upon a user-defined scoring matrix. The patent puts forth a computer driven information management system capable of selectively ranking and qualifying third parties, employing user-defined and selected questions, along with qualification criteria from public, commercial and private as well as in-house, data sources. Following the search process, the system displays the results of the scoring system for user selection. In addition, the system can automatically generate a notification of selection to the organization, the user and the third-party from whom the information was obtained.

Essentially, buyers and supply chain managers can now precisely define their ideal criteria as they apply to specific needs and receive accurate results on-demand, Ren explained.

"This technology allows users to quantify their needs and perform a real-time search against their own database or any other databases or sites that they have access to," he said. "The system then automatically scores, ranks and displays per user identified importance factors. This saves sig-

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nificant amount of time for all the buyers and all types of users.”

Beyond identifying suppliers within a globally inclusive supply chain structure, Ren stressed that firms can also utilize the technology to quantify and optimize corporate knowledge of purchasing of all categories of products and services.

“In much the same way buyers can identify and score suppliers, they can now apply any number of matrixes to individual items used within a department or companywide by searching their internal databases,” Ren explained. “Among other potential benefits, this otherwise unavailable level of insight and visibility can significantly help with product level compliance.”

Diversity development

Ren told *MBNUSA* that one of the key drivers behind this innovation was the recognition that corporate and governmental buyers often lack adequate time to seek out diverse suppliers, especially when conducting spot purchases.

“Even though many buyers have established criteria as well as matrixes, they have rarely been able to undergo comprehensive searches because it meant collecting and analyzing the data on their own manually. Even the most dedicated personnel understand that this can be a daunting task,” Ren said. “What we offer is an automatic obtainment and conversion tool capable of handling all of the searching, evaluating and reading of information to be able to make reliable decisions. With AECsoft’s

technology, the time component is no longer a barrier.”

While the entire supplier management community will benefit from this product’s deployment, Ren stressed its added significance for supplier development personnel.

“Our product has the power to serve as a tool in strategically developing diverse suppliers. For instance, if diverse suppliers continue to fall short, diversity directors can look at the matrix and identify areas where they can devote their resources to building and improving the future supply base,” Ren explained. “In some instances, search results may demonstrate that a fraction of diverse suppliers repeatedly lack adequate references or fail to meet the organization’s requirements for offering green products, etc. Being able to identify and assess these lacking components should ultimately help diverse firms develop a stronger competitive advantage.”

Corporate alignment

As a leading developer of project-focused and business productivity software, the patented invention not only complements AECsoft’s existing product portfolio, it strengthens the firm’s product line by opening the door to an enhanced client experience.

“It allows us to now invest more resources in further developing and enhancing our entire supply management suite into a more mature product,” Ren said. “Knowing that we have strong protection encourages us to invest heavily into broadening the scope of our product, as



Tom Ren

well as strengthening the education component so more people benefit from the tool.”

According to Ren, the goal is to consistently find ways to help customers to get more value from AECsoft solutions.

“We want to do all we can to help our customers achieve their objectives of automating their processes, saving more money, building relationships with their suppliers and increasing spend with diverse suppliers,” Ren said.

IN CONTEXT

Considering AECsoft’s ingrained position within the supplier management realm, one might easily understand why Ren and his team remain intently focused on enhancing the benefits it can provide to supplier management professional.

“This means optimized global sourcing for all buyers – large corporations, hospitals, universities, small and medium size companies, especially diverse suppliers – can all benefit from this patented process to search and rank large amounts of global supplier databases to quickly identify potential partners and/or suppliers with the absolutely best-fit to their exact needs, short term and long term,” Ren said. “This is truly the ultimate decision engine to optimize supplier qualification, management and product/service purchasing.”

However, the AECsoft invention goes far beyond traditional supplier management. Simply put, anyone can benefit from this next-generation of search technology:

Broad base – The AECsoft tool is not limited in the number of

databases its searches. This can be any data source an individual owns or to which it has access, including the wealth of data available across the entire World Wide Web.

Mindful matrix – Users have free range in establishing and saving their personally generated matrixes. This means when conducting any type of search, users have the ability to clearly identify exactly what they require or desire in their ideal match.

Solid scoring – Utilizing the user-generated matrix, the system automatically scores search results and lists them in order of relevance to individualized requirements. As a result, search accuracy is significantly higher than with any other methodology.

Periodic pursuit – Users can set the tool to automatically conduct searches at established intervals (day, week, month, etc.) – prompting the system to instantaneously peruse predefined databases on an ongoing basis and provide up-to-the-minute results.