

Technology firm impacts lives

By: Peter Fretty

For most entrepreneurs running a small business has its share of negativity, challenges and sacrifices. For Richard Martinez, the president and CEO of six-year-old r2 Technologies, the road has been filled with rewarding experiences and outstanding opportunities. "There are probably more challenges out there, but I tend to focus on the positive aspects of everything," said Martinez. "Having this outlook really is an asset because it sheds light on the opportunities."

Before starting r2 Technologies, Martinez built computer applications that helped corporations improve processes, today he helps people make successful career moves by finding them IT related positions. "I impact someone's life. Not that the computer work was irrelevant when I developed applications for the some country's largest companies, but now I have independent value that impacts individuals."

Martinez tells a story of being able to put two people to work the Monday before Christmas. "For them to be able to tell their families that they have a job over the holidays was so exciting, and makes it worth all the work," he said. "I am now in an area where I can truly make an impact. Outside of buying a house or getting married, a career is one of the top things in a person's life. Having someone trust you with their career is quite an honor and the results can be very rewarding. Our decisions impact them long-term."

Like many small businesses, the development of r2 has been an evolving process explained Martinez. With a BS degree in MIS from Trinity University, Martinez started his career as a program analyst for Texas Instruments. As his career evolved he worked for a number of other firms in the Dallas area before becoming an IT consultant. Martinez no longer does the consulting and now focuses entirely on professional services. Taking the major step of removing himself from the day to day consulting efforts occurred when one of his contracts was coming to an end and Martinez was getting ready to look for a new assignment. "My wife commented that it was time to give r2 Technologies a try on a fulltime basis. She said if it did not work, I could always go and find a new assignment," he said. "I am a very risk adverse individual, so having a few Fortune 100 companies already as clients eased the transition."

Fortunately, it was a success. In 1999 the company's gross sales were \$315,000, in 2000 sales grew to \$1.9 million, 2001 reached \$4.1 million and in 2002 the firm dropped slightly to \$3.2 million. "Like everyone else we had a bit of a setback even though we had five more people working. Although we were all making slightly less, I looked at it

as a positive because more people were employed.” This year r2 is on track to do \$4.5 million. “We love to compete and we have a client list that anyone would be proud to have. These companies engage business with us because we deliver services that they are looking for,” he said. “However it is the little stories of how our services have impacted the lives of our candidates that is truly important to me. Knowing that they are happy and consider the entire experience is how I measure success.”

After spending 19 years in the IT industry as an analyst, programmer, project manager and consultant moving into the role of a business owner was understandably a major accomplishment for Martinez. “Throughout my entire career I have engaged only with the Fortune 100 companies including Texas Instruments, Mobil Oil, Fidelity, Nations Bank, PepsiCo, and Verizon,” he said. “But my daily experiences today definitely stand out as my biggest career accomplishment.”

Martinez told Minority Business News that his firm has been successful in removing the blinders when it comes to ethnicity, and instead looks only at an individual’s skill set, unique abilities, how they demonstrate their qualifications and the quality of their references. “We strive to find a good fit for both the individuals and the clients regardless of anything outside those criteria,” he said. The natural result is diversity in the workforce, and the recent company picnic was proof. “We had about eighty people participating and we had our own little United Nations. It was a great blend that shows we have been successful in empowering minorities.”

The company initially went down the path of becoming a certified minority firm on the request of two clients, PepsiCo and American Airlines, both of which the firm already had a selected vendor status. “We have never gone into a new client as a minority owned business first, instead we look at having MBE certification as an addition to our service offering. It is not a ticket in, it is one more way that we can help the client,” he said.

Outside of his daily responsibilities at r2, Martinez is also active in the National Association of Computer Consultant Businesses (NACCB), where he is the Dallas Chapter President, his local chapter of the Minority Business Development Council, Boy Scouts of America and he is also focused on getting more students interested in IT and engineering fields.

SIDE BAR: Fun facts on Rick Martinez

Last book read:	“From the Gut” by Jack Welch
Favorite movie:	Sound of Music
Favorite city:	San Antonio (also his birth city)
Something few people know:	When Martinez was in high school he toured Europe as part of a folk song singing group.
Best advice for MBEs:	Know when to walk away from a deal. Your ethics define you and your business and they should not be taken lightly.

