



These Chicago tech firms are adding serious sales firepower

BY JOHN PLETZ SEPTEMBER 17, 2015

One sign that a tech company's products are firing on all cylinders is when the hiring focus shifts to sales.

So it's worth noting that SMS Assist and Geofeedia, two of the more interesting companies in Chicago tech, have added some serious sales firepower.

SMS Assist hired Matt Renner, a 20-year veteran of Oracle, as chief revenue officer. Although he has lived in Chicago for a decade, Renner was a top sales executive at Redwood City, Calif.-based Oracle, overseeing nearly 1,000 people selling software.

SMS' technology helps wrangle maintenance providers across multiple properties for big customers such as Family Dollar and O'Reilly Automotive. It manages a network of 20,000 subcontractors and customers with 90,000 locations.

"We saw a need to really step it up and hire a chief revenue officer to round out our C-suite and to build a world-class sales force," CEO Mike Rothman said.

It's another milestone for SMS, which is backed by Pritzker Group Venture Capital and is one of Chicago's stronger IPO prospects. The company has added 100 people over the past year in Chicago, where it now employs 425. SMS added 10,000 square feet of office space at the John Hancock Center, bringing its footprint there to 75,000 square feet.

GEOFEEDIA HIRE

Geofeedia, whose technology corrals social media dispatches by location, has hired former executives from GrubHub and Salesforce.com.

Steve Sanger, former vice president of business development at GrubHub, joins Geofeedia in a similar role. Justin Fite, a former sales executive at Indianapolis-based ExactTarget, which was acquired by Salesforce.com, becomes chief revenue officer at Geofeedia.

"These two hires allow us to move from a founder-driven company to more of a professionally managed company," CEO and co-founder Phil Harris said.

Fite and Sanger will help Geofeedia move more aggressively into enterprise sales and corporate partnerships. The four-year-old company's customers include police agencies, corporate customers and media outlets.

The company, which has operations in Chicago and Indianapolis, has doubled headcount to 55 people in the past year. It's backed by Hyde Park Venture Partners.