

---

## NSI, the Brazilian Software Firm that Was Also Born in a Garage

Contributed by Cláudia M. Abreu  
Sunday, 05 October 2008

How many company success stories began in a garage? Microsoft and Apple, for example, lived their tight past of wires and cables spread all over the place. In Brazil, this is also true. The trajectory of NSI (New Soft Intelligence), which develops software in the city of Limeira, in the interior of the state of São Paulo, has many of the typical ingredients of businesses established in "garages".

It brings together a sense of opportunity, entrepreneurship and a lot of daring. Daring that caused the company to develop an innovative foreign trade application, to win large clients, like Vale do Rio Doce, Bosch, TAM and Gol, among others, and, this year, to win an innovation award granted by Dell.

The NSI history began in the ancient Data Processing Department (DPC) of company Freios Vargas (currently TRW). The company founder, Roberto Silveira Garcia, was the manager of the Freios Varga (DPC), he had a regular job and salary. However, with the technology boom and the arrival of micro technology in Brazil, in the mid 1980s, he decided to establish his own business.

In a small room, with his son, he developed applications for corporate management and became a service provider. His first client: Freios Varga. "We developed an application for foreign trade management," said André Barros, business development manager at NSI and at the company since 1992. In the beginning, there were just four employees working hard, now there are 40 and revenues reached 4 million Brazilian reais (US\$ 2 million).

According to Barros, the application, "despite having been developed in a system prior to Windows, which had a black screen and no graphics, was very successful. It showed efficiency in the management of foreign trade operations."

In the early 1990s, the giant Oracle, the second largest information technology company in the world, arrived in Brazil. The company, which sells corporate management applications and programming tools, was seeking partners in the country.

"With courage, we knocked on their door and offered to develop the foreign trade application using their technology," said Barros. The partnership was soon sealed and eComex was born, an application for foreign trade management connected to the Oracle ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) tool.

The application works like a factory assembly line integrating, automatically, all those involved in foreign trade processes (import, export, exchange, drawback and other operations in special regimes).

"The system warns professionals about the phases that should be executed, those that have been concluded and the bottlenecks in the operation. The information is not lost and the whole process may be controlled efficiently. If there is a problem, a document stopped at some phase of the operation, it will be identified immediately and the operation may be solved," said Barros.

This year, to add value to the product, the NSI developed tool eComex Workflow, which integrates the application to Outlook. "Outlook is one of the first programs that people open in the morning and the last they close at the end of the day. So we made use of this integration to add one more function to the application," stated Barros.

When the user opens Outlook, he receives a list of tasks informing him of the point each process is at and what he should do to conclude the operation. "The integration is in a collaborative manner," he says.

After that, all the client needs to do is enter eComex and execute the listed task. NSI also developed eComex Remote, which allows for the access of data via mobile phone, smart phone or PDA (Personal Digital Assistant).

The application, however, was a product turned to large companies, mainly due to the cost involved: user license, annual maintenance fee (to guarantee the updating of the technology) and implementation project, which involves tests, training, adequacy of equipment, etc.

"And we wanted to supply small and medium companies, which have the same problems of large companies, when the matter is foreign trade, but do not have so much money to invest in the purchase of an application. So we developed the eComex Suite, within the SaaS (Software as a Service) line," explained Barros.

The idea is inspired on the American model, which treats software as a service. You pay for the use, eliminating many costs, with the installation of a server. This characteristic granted the organization the Dell Excellence Award in Technology 2008. With the award, NSI will receive 45,000 reais (US\$ 22,500) in Dell solutions and services to expand its business, apart from meeting the Dell CEO, Michael Dell, in the United States.

According to Barros, an eComex Suite pilot is being tested by a company in São Paulo and results have been very positive. To the executive, there are still cultural barriers to be broken. "Some businessmen ask me: but will my confidential data be exposed? I explain that there is a confidentiality contract to protect the information," he explained.

In the American model, according to Barros, there are companies that charge up to US\$ 70 a month for the service. The billing may also be done by package, and by operation. The greater the volume, the cheaper it becomes. The form of billing is yet to be defined by NSI.

Anba

