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Global Water Fathom: A Smart Utility-to-Utility Solution



by Mia Javier | July 14th 2011
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Phoenix-based Global Water has launched a new smart water solution named Fathom: the solution represents one of the most thoughtful go-to-market strategies that I have come across to date.

Led by President and CEO, Trevor Hill, Global Water owns and operates regulated water and wastewater utilities in the south western states. Hill is a mechanical engineer by training and was on the leading edge of membrane adoption – specifically membrane bioreactor water recycling systems – in the nineties. He has since become a leader in the development of business models for water, and channels-to-market evangelist.

After years of new technology adoption to drive down the cost of operation of Global Water's own water treatment systems and wastewater recycling and purple pipe distribution systems, it became clear to Hill that Global's insight and experiences could be very useful to the multitudes of municipalities out there struggling with water scarcity issues. Indeed, in addition to availability issues, utilities operate in a world of increasing costs and revenue reductions.

These issues became particularly acute when the market turned in 2008. Fathom™ was Hill's solution to addressing municipal concerns head on: lack of capital, lack of IT infrastructure and risk aversion to new technologies that could improve operations and drive down costs in the face of increasing demand.

Commercialized in 2009, Fathom™ is an integrated platform of technology products designed to bring efficiencies to utility operations and consists of advanced metering infrastructure, customer information systems and asset management systems. The technologies are bundled with financing and rapidly implemented via what Hill terms, a utility-to-utility solution. In other words, the solutions are not only affordable, they are offered with a 'cloak of comfort' since the solutions have been deployed and validated in his own utilities.

Perhaps this is the beauty of the business model. Global Water fundamentally understands the economics and the business that utilities are faced with. In this way, Global is able to deploy a team of sales representatives to contact utility managers at small to mid-sized utilities and explain from the perspective of numbers, how Fathom™ solutions can help save on costs. And he has the direct utility-derived experience to back it up.

The revenue numbers are speaking for themselves. In 2009, the company went from revenue of a couple hundred thousand dollars to \$4 million in 2010 and is currently on pace to double revenue for 2011. With the recent rate increase, the regulated side of the Global Water business generates revenue of \$30 million on its own.

In addition to streamlining operational costs, for Hill, the fundamental challenge facing 21st century utility management is figuring out how to destroy demand to survive resource scarcity without also destroying the financial viability of the utility. And towards that end, Hill has also been an avid promoter and thought leader on rate structures that allow for both conservation and the financial viability of utilities.

Learn more about Fathom here: <http://www.gwfathom.com/fathom-u2u-solutions.html>



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