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Q&A with Resolve Technology CEO Eric Forman

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Resolve Technology has an 18-year track record of creating tech products that assist real estate investors in optimizing their portfolios. The Boston-based firm specializes in software that pulls together property data from disparate sources, and then re-packages it in an integrated and timely manner that allows decision-makers to quickly react to changing markets without relying on clunky spreadsheet technology.

Clients include First Industrial Realty Trust, General Growth Properties, Kimco, Prudential, State Street Corp., UBS and other life insurers, funds, trusts and banks that manage over 2 billion sq. ft. of real estate worth more than a half-trillion dollars.

Before launching Resolve in 1990, company CEO Eric Forman worked in acquisitions and finance at Prudential Securities Real Estate Investment Group and Guaranty Acceptance Credit Corp. Forman holds an MBA from Boston University Graduate School and maintains a blog, "Imminent Domain," touching on process-improvement issues and products in the real estate investment world.

NREI: What is your company mission and how does Resolve differ from other real estate tech firms out there?

Forman: Our sole focus is to produce solutions that real estate management firms need, to maximize their holdings. We're taking those functions out of Excel, which is not a tool built for real estate analysis and investment, and moving them into an integrated solution that's customized for real estate investment. For a company to have confidence in its information and also be able to accurately project its returns with software is brand-new stuff in the industry. There are lots of vendors selling property management, accounting or cash-flow valuation products but the great majority of investors already have these. Now we're seeing our solutions becoming "must-haves" in a real estate company's arsenal.

NREI: Tell us about these solutions, starting with your Portfolio Maximizer.

Forman: Maximizer allows managers to try out different buying and selling scenarios and other "what-ifs." For example, what would happen if I held back cash reserves or I sold this property, then I bought that portfolio? These scenarios allow them to project out those scenarios and then to execute strategies that will maximize returns.

There are many other aspects to this. A lot of real estate organizations have separate teams working on the different pieces of a portfolio in different departments. Often, each produces its own set of analysis, so there's a lot of replication and a lot more inconsistency and individual silos. With the Maximizer, you have one standard approach to analysis and understanding investor returns. The result is a better, more integrated type of report, better analysis and more industry best practices and transparency. We'll go visit a prospect and see their partner's shop and the Excel modes they use. Some have eight worksheets within that model and they're just rife with errors. We make the whole process integrated and auditable. These things haven't been done previously in any organized process.

NREI: You also have a core product called Request. Where does it fit in?

Forman: We noticed that there are dedicated roles for people whose sole job is to focus on data; data-governance managers, data directors, data czars and so on. Their need to manage all that real estate data in growing portfolios essentially forced us to come up with



the Request solution. Request is basically a business-intelligence and integration platform that consolidates real estate data across all assets. And it gives investors and managers a more comprehensive view of their portfolios. For example, State Street, [a financial services provider to institutional investors], wanted to provide pension-fund clients with greater visibility into their investments and Request was a perfect solution. Kimco has got partnerships all over the place and those partners and investors needed to be assured that the right decisions are being made and need to see all of the details -- everything -- under one roof.

NREI: Are there side benefits to your products?

Forman: Many. During down times, investors want more specific data [on investments] than in good times. They want to know what they're losing and where they are losing. Currently, that's all being done manually and much is done by re-keying information or emailing or FedEx-ing hard copies, and that's completely inefficient. It's our aim to automate the whole process and give these organizations easy and fast access. Clients can write their own custom reports as well. The report that someone needed yesterday is a different one than the one they need tomorrow and an organization has to be agile enough to meet those changes. We're selling a platform that enables them to deliver a revised or customized report very quickly.

NREI: Can your products help smaller real estate investors?

We've targeted large companies because they're easier to find, but our solution benefits all companies' sizes. All real estate companies have the same challenges, just in different magnitudes. We serve public and private REIT's, pension funds, insurance companies and companies that have any type of connection with real estate.

NREI: How much do your products cost?

Forman: That varies. Our philosophy is to get the products to people so they can do all they need to do, so that's why we only sell enterprise-wide solutions. As a result, we base our pricing on assets under management. We have some firms with 400 people using our product.

NREI: Are you planning any new products in the coming months?

Forman: We are always improving functionalities. We have new ones that come out every month. One of our standing objectives is add more and more depth to our products. In fact, about a third of our budget goes to R & D. We have an extremely aggressive roadmap for our [new and revised] portfolio-management products.

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