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Technology

TeamSupport's new CEO sees 'wide open market for us to go attack' 🔑

Pete Khanna, CEO, TeamSupport
JUNMO LEE

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As Pete Khanna interviewed with TeamSupport before he became CEO, there were no in-person chats. Instead, it was all handled over videoconferencing, a new experience for him amid COVID-19.

"You actually had more quality interactions in my mind during this process than you'd have in the past, because people felt like you only had a certain amount of time to get it in, and they didn't want it to drag out," Khanna said. "So you got to kind of the best of both worlds — more meetings in a less period of time, and you can really get to know people."

While the Zoom call is becoming more common with hiring these days, the episode was another reminder of how companies are looking to embrace new tools to handle traditional processes. North Texas' TeamSupport, which helps businesses better manage their B2B customers, is trying to encourage others to invest in technology tools that can improve their customer relationships.

"People are finding that they need better software to engage with customers now, and it needs to be in an efficient manner that's a little bit more complex than maybe it was before," Khanna said. "And if they don't have that software, they're suffering because they can't just jump on a plane and mend the relationship. They have to be ahead of it — proactive — so that's where we really think our value is, and I think it's going to last for a long time."

Khanna took over for co-founder Robert Johnson in what is the first new CEO for the company. Khanna sees strong propects ahead for TeamSupport,which has more than 50 employees. The company landed an investment from Level Equity in 2018.

Khanna himself comes with a resume that includes being the CEO of TrackVia, a low-code application platform, and working for McAfee after being president of MX Logic, a security company that was acquired by McAfee.

Why did you take the job?

When I look for opportunities I want to make sure that what we're doing is meaningful — meaningful to the people that we're selling our product to — and at the heart of every great business is a passionate customer base. And we're selling software that helps them take care of their customers, whether that's engagement, whether that's transactional, whether that's long term, we provide that. That was exciting to me.

Can you talk to me more about what your company does?

We provide customer support software for transactional ticketing. We're also rolling out two new products here shortly that will allow customers to handle more of a success and ongoing relationship and engagement (approach) ... making sure they understand the health of their customer base and how to be proactive. Engagement with customers is key now. It's not a transactional relationship anymore. I'm old enough to remember when it was, Hey, I'll just when soon as I close the ticket I've done my job — from a support standpoint. That's not the case anymore. Customers expect more. We also will provide kind of key insights into the business, so they can look at their data in various ways to gain decision-making criteria and understand their business in more detail. It's really an end-to-end company from support to success.

How do you see the company shaping up after the experience you bring there?

We're certainly not an early stage business; we've been around for 12 years. We have over 500 clients that we service today so we're established business. But getting to the next stage, being an industry leader is where we're headed. We're on a great trajectory to get there. And so now it's about how we're servicing our customer in a more multifaceted way. ... Once you scale a company have to have a systematic way support your customers, how you handle product innovation and product development. And then how are you hiring and recruiting talent, because you can't do much if you don't have great people that are that are committed to the organization and want to work with you on the vision to become that leader and maintain that success. So, those are the things that I take with me from the previous job. It's never easy. It's hard building and scaling an industry leader. But there's a great team here. We have strong customer base, and it's a wide open market. It's a wide open market for us to go attack.

What about COVID-19?

We're fortunate to be in this in this space. I think every company saw kind of a pause in this March, April timeframe — with companies trying to figure out what they're doing, regardless of what industry you're in. But we're seeing purchasing happen. We're seeing inquiries coming into the business, and we're seeing the ability to grow. We'd love it not to be a pandemic for just the human sake of things and getting back a little bit more normalcy of in-person meetings. But fortunately our software's is is providing a great service, and companies are still buying it — and even more.

What about taking over for the co-founder?

Robert isn't disappearing or running off. He still remains on our board and is still engaged. It's my job coming in — is to honor what's made us great so far. There's a tremendous amount of success to be built on here.

Now, my job, and what I've done in the past, is to figure out how to make that even bigger without sacrificing kind of our core principles.

Can you talk somewhat about your philosophy on leadership?

At any tech company, you have to create some principles around the customers. We can create the best software in the world but if nobody wants to buy it, it's probably not that valuable. So we have to have a customer feedback — what are the customers doing with our software. It's not like a changing culture here — to put the customer first and really understand. So, as you scale it's harder. The more customers you have, the harder it is to engage with them. So how are we going to view having repetitive touchpoint engagement with our customers. The second is what's our true positioning for growth. One thing I want to stress — it's not like this is a turnaround situation. The other thing is you can't build great companies with out great people. So how are we keeping them engaged, how we're making sure they grow, and how are they solving meaningful problems.

The interview was edited for grammar, clarity and flow.

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