TECH UNVEILED BY VEILSUN | EPISODE 1

When Your Systems Don't Talk

Most businesses rely on multiple software platforms to keep operations running, but those systems don't always communicate. In this episode, James Cosman, President and Chief Solutions Architect at VeilSun, joins Billy Gerard to explore why systems become disconnected, where to start fixing the problem, and how custom applications can bring everything together.

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PART ONE

Why systems stopped talking

BILLY GERARD

Hi, I'm Billy Gerard. We're here today on the VeilSun Podcast. VeilSun, where we build intelligent apps orchestrating people, systems, and AI. I'm joined today by James Cosman, the president and chief solutions architect here at the company, and we're answering some of your questions, many of your questions. One of the most popular comes to us today, and it reads, “Our systems don't talk to each other.” James, I know you hear this all the time. Help guide us through this challenge.

JAMES COSMAN

Yeah, it's definitely something we hear a lot from our customers. Fifteen to twenty years ago, everything was about digital transformation: let's take everything we're doing on paper and get it into some sort of digital system. In a lot of companies, that thought was misimplemented. For many of them, it meant going out and buying as many pieces of software as they could and stitching together solutions. People bought software for everything. At first it was amazing, especially with the onset of SaaS and being able to see things online. But it became really clear that you couldn't get a singular picture of any part of the business, because it was all disparate.

JAMES COSMAN

So people started building spreadsheets to work between all of these different systems.

> **“A spreadsheet, to me, is really a symptom of a bigger problem.”**
>
> JAMES COSMAN, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF SOLUTIONS ARCHITECT

JAMES COSMAN

It means you haven't thought through what your processes are, how you need to approach them, and how people need data access from the field all the way up to the C-suite. What happened was companies bought as many pieces of software as they could and filled in the gaps between them with spreadsheets.

BILLY GERARD

It almost seemed like for every piece of software we added, it called for another one. We filled one hole and created two more.

JAMES COSMAN
It's almost like an addiction, and it's how a lot of these software companies got really big, really fast. They had one piece of the solution that worked really well, but nothing talked together. In the last ten years, before AI got really popular, people started to say, "Okay, let's find a way to integrate these solutions so they work together." But they're still forgetting one layer: the custom application layer between these systems. Everywhere there's a spreadsheet in a business, everywhere you have a paper process, that's a need for a custom solution that integrates with all of those systems.

JAMES COSMAN
In manufacturing, they call it a digital thread, where no data is lost from the beginning to the end of the process. With the advent of AI, and app building getting quicker and quicker, building custom software used to seem very expensive, but everything is getting so quick. You'll have five or six big pieces of software, a bunch of custom apps between them, and data flowing freely throughout the entire system. That's how you get a single pane of glass. That's really what we work on with our customers.

PART TWO

Where to start

BILLY GERARD
In the VeilSun way, what's the first step to getting things to talk to one another?

JAMES COSMAN
You don't start by talking about technology at all. You start with the strategy of the business and how work flows through it. Only once we've worked with a customer to figure out how all of this fits together do we step back and ask, does our tech stack support this, or does it not? And what needs to happen from a technology standpoint?

JAMES COSMAN
That can be very overwhelming for any business, small or large. So you find a starting point and solve a high-impact problem really early. Maybe it's an app that captures scheduling data from the field and is also connected to JD Edwards and Procore, bringing all that data in together. There's an analogy from Six Sigma that I like.

> **“Take the biggest rock out of the river and it lowers the river just enough that you can see the next set of rocks.”**
>
> JAMES COSMAN, ON THE SIX SIGMA APPROACH

JAMES COSMAN
Then you tackle those rocks, and the river lowers some more. That's the approach we take: think broadly, then zoom in quickly on a high-impact problem to solve.

PART THREE

Getting people to use it

BILLY GERARD
We hear a lot, “What if my people won't use it? We built this thing to connect everything, and now it sits on the shelf. No one will touch it.”

JAMES COSMAN
Now you're getting into organizational culture. It really comes down to the stick or the carrot. Our goal when we're working with a customer is to build software that people want to use.

> **“No software adopts itself.”**
>
> JAMES COSMAN, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF SOLUTIONS ARCHITECT

JAMES COSMAN
The idea that if you build perfect software, people will just want to use it is a lie. People don't like change, but if you build software that makes it easy to prove the case, that this is what's making your life easier, people usually come on board pretty quickly. And you target the people who least want to use the software. That's who you build the system for: the people most resistant to technology. That's a bit of our approach. Some organizations just can't get there, so sometimes they use the stick. That's another way to do it, but it's the fallback.

PART FOUR

Your first step

BILLY GERARD

Say my systems don't talk to each other. What's the first step in approaching VeilSun for a solution, and how would I know I need to take it now?

JAMES COSMAN

We call them problem barfing sessions. The way we work with customers is you come in and barf out all your problems. We help you inventory them, figure out how they interrelate, and decide on a starting point. Only then do we say, okay, these are the technologies we might bring in. It could be a full custom-built app that interconnects with your other systems. It could be reducing the number of software tools and buying one bigger piece of software that solves much more of the problem in one system, with apps built around it. But the key is finding the right place to start first.

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

Your Systems Should Work Together.

Not sure where to begin? Our App Checkup is a good first step toward identifying what isn't connecting and where to focus first.

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No pressure, no pitch.

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