

# Expanding focus by assessing IT's value

## Iselin firm allows customers to manage finances behind tech costs

By [Martin C. Daks](#)

When CEO Robert J. Svec and his business partner, Alan Maltz, bought the assets of ComSci LLC in August 2005, the company concentrated on reducing businesses' telecommunications costs.

But the business partners reoriented ComSci by expanding its focus and channeling Svec's inner accountant to sniff out inefficiencies across IT departments, helping chief information officers understand "the cost, quality and value of the IT services they deliver," according to Svec, who at one time served as chief financial officer in the IT division of Chemical Bank. "IT was always that big pool of costs ... that nobody really understood," he said. In the first two to three months of an assignment, ComSci specialists analyze the services an internal IT department provides; they then develop less-costly alternatives.



But on an ongoing basis, ComSci — based in the Iselin section of Woodbridge — can take those costs and parse them out in a kind of financial statement format, posted to a secure website, that lets a client see how its IT department is being used, what the unit costs associated with its services are and how they should be allocated. This allows each department manager or executive to "get a view as to what they're buying or consuming from IT on a monthly basis," Svec said. Because ComSci monitors the costs and updates its reports on a monthly basis, it lets the firm go beyond a one-off assignment, and instead establishes a recurring revenue stream while cementing close-knit relationships with client companies like 1-800-Flowers.com and The Bank of New York Mellon Corp.

"With any kind of business, you have to look at diversification," said Marguerite L. Mount, a managing director of Mercadien Group, a business advisory firm in Hamilton. "It's important to build a balance between annuity work and transactional work, since with transactional work you're basically building from the ground up with each engagement."

With ComSci's analyses in hand, clients can do trend reporting, assumption planning, "and all the fun stuff around that," Svec said. "In many cases, we actually replace the client's cost-recovery system," a big step up from the traditional IT costing system, which he compared to "spreading costs like peanut butter, based on headcount or something like that."

This kind of approach has let the firm grow through the recession, according to Svec, who said ComSci posted "just south of \$10 million" of revenue in 2010, nearly 20 percent higher than 2009, when "we continued to grow, but our growth rate slowed."

Right now, the company's primary focus is IT, but ComSci may eventually look to expand to other kinds of cost allocation services, he added. "But right now we're going to continue to maintain our focus on IT," Svec said. "Five to seven years from now, maybe we'll go beyond IT. But today our focus is really staying in IT."