

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

This interview with Rob Davies discusses the business at ViON, their technology focus and discusses their strategic relationship with Coquina Systems going forward.



At ViON, we're focused on providing the technology and automating all of the work that goes around deploying, measuring, monitoring, billing, and governance. **Coquina** provides us the ability to expand our services and add capability for the short term or long term. The breadth of their technology experience and flexible delivery models match very well with ViON's offerings.



~ **Rob Davies**
Chief Operating Officer



About ViON Corporation

ViON Corporation is a cloud service provider with over 40 years' experience designing and delivering enterprise data center solutions for government agencies and commercial businesses.

The company provides a large portfolio of IT as-a-Service, including infrastructure, multi- cloud and artificial intelligence (AI) solutions. Focused on supporting the customer's IT modernization requirements, ViON provides a streamlined management platform to audit and control technology in an evolving multi-cloud world.

The ViON Marketplace™ allows customers to research, compare, procure and manage a full range of Everything as-a-Service solutions from leading manufacturers via a single portal.

Meet Rob Davies, COO

In addition to being the COO for ViON, Rob Davies is responsible for ViON's Cloud and Infrastructure as-a-Services offerings, as well as Professional Services, Managed Services and Support Services of the organization. Rob has 30 years of experience supporting Federal and commercial business in information technology.



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THE INTERVIEW

As a company that's been around for a while, how has your business evolved?

Rob: ViON is a 40-year-old technology company that provides solutions to the Federal and State and Local Governments. Our most significant evolution is the move to a cloud service provider. Today the majority of our business is delivering long-term, on-premise, enterprise IT as-a-Service. We provide agencies with cloud business models, so they can access technology on their premise or in a co-located center that they utilize. We help them better manage their budgets, rapidly increase the pace of technology acquisition, and deliver platforms to help them modernize and optimize their IT environment.

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What is the size of your business today that focuses on government entities?

Rob: In total, we have about 100 employees and \$180 Million in revenues. Within our government focus, we have 25 contracts across 3 states and 22 federal agencies and the remaining contract value on all of those is about \$1.2 Billion. So, it's a fairly sizable portfolio and growing.

When we have a contract, we try to create the ability for the customer to acquire all of the data center technology that they need – including services. In addition to providing technology, we're aiming to provide our customers flexibility and agility. They don't have to use our contract for all the services, but it's there when they need it. This is where Coquina comes in. Coquina is a critical partner helping us round out our capability and giving us greater depth and breadth in our service offerings to our customers.

Describe your cloud solutions as it relates to government IT infrastructure and data center operations?

Rob: In the Federal Government, there are very large workloads that both drive a great deal of processing and data storage. The majority of these systems have been around for years and are tightly integrated with other systems built over time. These are often workloads that aren't easy to cost effectively migrate to the cloud or perhaps they are not even suitable for the cloud. Nonetheless these large systems and environments still need to be modernized and optimized. Our cloud models allow customers to take advantage of cloud economics and capabilities without the expensive and time consuming migrations to the public cloud. Most of our business today is delivering a public cloud-like model with the ability to increase or decrease capacity without penalty and/or without term.

As the government moves to get away from owning data centers – whether it is compute, storage or network, we move into that role. We own the technology, and the Government accesses what they need, when they need, for the time they need it. The ViON Marketplace® allows customers to model technology, order capacity, and manage and monitor that capacity at the same pricing they're accustomed to in the public cloud. We provision whatever is required and deliver that to their data center and get it all setup. We can run it for them in a fully managed model, or can we simply provide the technology and they run it, in a minimally managed model.

Are there other technology areas you feel are significant for business growth or areas you see having more visibility and focus for the government?

Rob: For us it's more about trying to get our customers to understand the value of what a technology as a service model can mean for them from an operational and budgetary perspective. With the government, fast and agile are not words that come to mind. With a model like ours, you can have access to technology quickly. You can evaluate and pilot new technology in 30 days where it may have taken over a year to procure it; at which point you lose the momentum and the advantage of that technology for your mission or business. It also saves a tremendous amount of effort in the procurement department. A contracting officer no longer has to line up 17 different procurements to buy technology, they can just rely on the technical project manager and access the technology available to them in the contract. This allows the contract officer to spend their time on more strategic and larger acquisitions that all agencies have. It smooths out the budget, saves time in procurement and gives greater access to technology, faster.

In terms of government focus, we also see cyber technology, AI and analytics as a huge thrust for the government today. For us it is the same thing – being able to deliver those in the same model and being able to give the government the right analytics tools they need. Some of the AI technologies work very well in a cloud-like model where others may be very expensive and very dense, meaning that if you need to access that resource in a public cloud it's really expensive. The economics are almost upside down. If I can deliver that to you as a service incrementally and get you going, you'll have it in your data center under your control of management, which gives you a lot more flexibility in how you use it. So, we think some of these technologies play very well within our model and the operating parameters of the government. It's less a focus on a specific technology and more about being able to ensure we have a strong value proposition in our model with the government.

How does Coquina Systems fit in the services part of these contracts?

Rob: At ViON, we're focused on providing the technology and automating all of the work that goes around deploying, measuring, monitoring, billing, and governance. Coquina provides us the ability to expand our services, add capability for the short term and/or long term. The breadth of their technology experience and flexible delivery models match very well with ViON's offerings.

We've spent a lot of time with Coquina looking at the different technologies we have to make sure they have the skillset to help us in those technology areas. When we have a customer that wants a resident for a particular storage or compute technology to come and be with them for a year, we work with Coquina to get that person. They're very responsive and we've never had a problem with the people they deliver. It really helps us extend our business so that we get that extra customer touch. We don't have to always use Coquina and sometimes we have a mix of their people and ours, so they are easy to work with and incredibly responsive – allowing us to do more for our customers.



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How would you describe your relationship with Coquina Systems?

Rob: I've worked with Dale Miller, founder of Coquina for several years. Based on his background, he understands, not only what the technical issues are for a given program or project, but the overarching issues. More importantly, he helps us identify issues that we're not seeing, and recommending ways to avoid those technical or delivery problems – and that's really important. Dale has lived it before, so I know that if we had a serious issue with a customer, he would solve it and take it as seriously as I would.

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Do you use other service providers, other than Coquina Systems?

Rob: There are a lot of companies that provide services to the federal government and we have a lot of partners. Most of them, however, are structured to provide long terms professional services to the Government. They may get a 5-year contract that includes a task leader, an architect and a systems administrator who work at that government site every day for 5 years. These service providers are not structured with the kind of flexibility to address shorter term project-based services where a customer needs a particular skillset for only a few weeks or months.

What Coquina has is a network of employees, consultants and partners that can handle any project. They of course can do the more fixed, longer-term engagements but also have the flexibility for the added unique technology skills needed for other projects that come up. The folks are so good, we're often extending those projects. Even though some of those projects are from 2-6 months in duration, they usually find other projects for them to work on.

For Coquina, that's the beauty of the relationship. They run the spectrum from project-based, time-defined programs to indefinite delivery and quantity solutions where a person will be allocated for the next 3 years.



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Are there technology areas where Coquina is better suited than others?

Rob: Coquina Systems is the first partner we call, period. Whether it is for project management, technical administration, or some complex AI project. If it's in and around IT, Coquina is the first group we go to, to work with.



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Are there other areas Coquina could provide added value in expanding the relationship?

Rob: Yes, they've worked hard to date to do that. They've spun up a federally-focused subsidiary to drive more public-sector and government requirements and I think that will help. The ability to hold security clearances and cleared people will help us with customers and leverage Coquina's capabilities more broadly because about ½ of our business is with DoD and Intelligence community where security clearances come into play and the balance is more civilian agencies where clearances are not a factor. That is one thing I know Coquina is working on.