



FUNDAMENTAL'S 'One Stop Shop' Solution

AGF speaks with Neil Hampton, Fundamental Software's CEO, about the firm's end-to-end Investment Management system and its benefits to asset managers

AFRICA GLOBAL FUNDS (AGF): PLEASE TELL US ABOUT FUNDAMENTAL SOFTWARE AND YOUR END-TO-END INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT SOLUTION.

NEIL HAMPTON (NH): The Fundamental Portfolio Manager (FPM) is an end-to-end (Front-to-Back) Investment Management system that utilises modern technology to provide a functionally rich and versatile platform. The Front-to-Back solution provides an integrated 'one stop shop' for Fund Managers, Wealth Managers, Unit Trusts, Mutual Funds, Multi-Managers and Pension Funds. FPM is offered as a Hosted (Cloud) service providing a secure, highly available and scalable infrastructure allowing our clients to utilise the software without having to concern themselves with hardware infrastructure or database maintenance.

A Cloud based integrated end-to-end solution is particularly beneficial to small and medium sized investment firms who don't have the budget or resources to buy and integrate multiple best-of-breed systems or maintain the underlying infrastructure.

Our integrated Front-to-Back product strategy is centred around our Investment Administration and Fund Accounting solution. Middle Office capabilities include Post-trade Compliance, TWR Performance and Client Reporting. The Front Office provides automated and user-friendly tools for Modelling and Order Management. The Unitisation module provides graphical workflows for bulk allocations and pricing of unitised products such as Unit Trusts, Mutual Funds, Fund of Funds and Multi-Manager funds.

AGF: WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT YOUR PRODUCT?

NH: Firstly, the underlying technology is modern compared to competitor solutions making the software easy to use, implement and integrate with third party systems or providers. And for the Southern African region we provide integrated functionality that adheres to local regulatory, taxation and other industry standards.

The integrated end-to-end solution is a key differentiator providing investment firms with a cost-effective 'one stop shop' solution whether they are Fund Managers, Multi-Managers or Pension Funds who can combine their external manager funds with their internally managed funds in a single solution.

Also, FPM's Graphical workflows provide efficiencies through automating process, notifications, reasonability checks and reporting, enabling administrators to process high volumes timeously and with confidence.

Finally, Fundamental Software prides itself on offering a responsive service to our clients who we see as partners in driving the evolution of our products and services to ensure we are addressing the current and future requirements of our clients.

AGF: WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE AS A SERVICE PROVIDER?

NH: One of our big challenges is resourcing. FPM is a large and complex product that requires unique blend of technical and functional (investment markets) skills. Finding and keeping these skills is a challenge in a world where software developers are in demand. We address this by investing in our people and providing a fun, inspiring and challenging work environment that rewards quality work. We have been successful in retaining key resources, which is evidenced by the fact that we have a core group of people that have been with the company ten years or more.

Another challenge is that as a local software provider, we are competing against large global competitors with deep pockets. To compete and win we need to do things more efficiently, be more flexible and clever as well as go the extra mile in servicing our clients.

In addition, in the Back-Office software space is the trend to outsourcing of Back Office services. Our Front and Middle Office systems are playing an important role here allowing clients that outsource their Back Office to access affordable Front and Middle Office tools such as automated Order Management, Modelling, TWR Performance reporting and Compliance. Investment firms are also increasingly looking for a Shadow-NAV capability and FPM provides an affordable solution for independent valuations and other Portfolio Management activities.

AGF: HOW FINTECH IS SHAPING ASSET MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY AND WHAT ARE THE KEY CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO FINTECH ADOPTION FACED BY FUND MANAGERS?

NH: Investment firms are demanding more flexibility in access to data, faster, on more platforms and technologies but face the challenge of adapting legacy technologies used by the firm or their outsource partner. FPM is actually well positioned in this regard relative to our competitors as our modern and robust technology makes it easier for us to adapt quickly to the rapidly changing landscape.

AGF: HOW DO YOU ADAPT AND IMPROVE FPM TO KEEP IT IN LINE WITH THE LATEST AVAILABLE INTERNATIONAL TECHNOLOGY?

NH: Our development team utilise Agile methodology which allows rapid change to our product and we complement that with comprehensive and extensive automated regression testing which enables us to deliver new versions of our software regularly and with confidence. Fundamental Software has some of the industry's leading experts in software for Investment Markets and we are continually evolving our platform to stay current with industry trends and technologies.