

# 15

# YEARS ANNIVERSARY

## 9 Questions with Square 9 after 15 Years

15 years in business is an incredible milestone for a company, and Square 9 is proud to have shared this experience with our customers, partners, and dedicated team who all continue to shape the ECM industry. To celebrate, Square 9 founders Tony Bishop and Steve Young are here to answer questions about the company's humble beginnings, its greatest challenges and achievements, and most memorable moments.

### 1. How did you meet and come together as business partners?

**Steve:** Tony worked for a reseller that I supported at a previous software company, and we worked closely together on several large ECM projects. Brian and I worked together previously at the same company but stayed in touch after we both left. I had been recruiting him to join us for a couple of years before he finally agreed.

**Tony:** Steve and I worked together while I was at an Office Equipment Dealer, and he was our Document Management Representative. I left the dealer to pursue my own company and Steve wanted to join on. Steve and Brian worked together at his former employer, and Brian was already a successful software developer.

### 2. What do you recall about the early days of Square 9?

**Steve:** It was a lot of fun and very exciting but also very long days of 16 hours or more. Some of my favorite memories are:

- Working at a shared folding table so small that two of us couldn't have our laptops fully open at the same time.
- Hitting 25K in sales a month. At the time this seemed like a big step for us in proving we had a viable model
- Signing our first reseller, CT Business Systems (now Xerox Business Solutions)

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**Tony:** We were quite small and our solution was in its infancy, but we pressed on every day to improve the product and generate whatever interest we could in order to generate sales.

3. [Was there a eureka moment when you knew that specializing in digital transformation solutions would be, or was the right decision?](#)

**Steve:** I was sold on the industry as a whole when I began working in it for another company in 1998. The possibilities with workflow automation and information mining were in their early stages, but you could see businesses moving in that direction.

When we signed our first partner however in 2007, we rode along with them on calls for about two months straight doing 2-3 sales calls today. At that time most ECM systems started at about \$15-20K which eclipsed the cost of the MFP they were proposing. You could see these products were not the right fit for their needs. It was during this time we realized the amount of scanning that businesses were doing and their need for an affordable solution to effectively manage all of that scanned content.

**Tony:** Not really. Steve and I both had a background in digital transformation and we knew there was a huge untapped market at that time.

4. [How has Square 9 evolved over the last 15 years?](#)

**Steve:** There's been so many changes. We went from three guys with a handful of partners to 75 employees with hundreds of resellers and distributors. Our products completely evolved during that time from primarily SMB to Enterprise scalability, and we expanded from just ECM to a full digital transformation platform with intelligent data extraction and web forms management.

**Tony:** We started with little business experience and learned every aspect of business management as we went along. We started with no customers and have evolved into a world leader with several thousand installations around the world.

5. [As team builders, is there a common thread – a particular background or trait – that flows through the people you hire for Square 9?](#)

**Steve:** We're looking for people who are passionate about what they do. It doesn't matter what role they are in, passion is the characteristic I look for the most.

**Tony:** We look for dedicated people with a "Can Do" mentality. We expect everyone to work hard and continue learning and improving on a daily basis.

6. [What do you envision for Square 9 in the next 15 years?](#)

**Steve:** I feel that with the introduction of Artificial Intelligence and Robotic process automation, the need for people to logically catalog information and put it to work for them will be even greater than ever. Our industry and our company has evolved greatly in the last 15 years, and I expect it to continue for the next 15 as the value of information continues to grow.

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**Tony:** I expect that Square 9 will continue to offer solutions as the market dictates. Nobody really knows what to expect in 15 years but I assure you it will be different than today.

7. What values do you share as founders, and how are these reflected in Square 9's values as a company?

**Steve:** I believe we all have a shared commitment to our reseller and customer communities that flows through everything we do. As a company that has always been privately held, we were able to make decisions that we felt were in the best long term interests of our customers without worrying about how Wall Street felt about it. That independence and commitment is what I believe has led to our rapid growth and our success.

**Tony:** Our goal was to create a company where we can recruit good people and provide growth opportunities while maintaining an environment that employees look forward to coming to daily.

8. Who was your first customer, and how did it come about?

**Steve:** Our first customer was Durst Corp, who is still a customer today. I had originally traveled to meet them about another ECM product we were offering at the time. They liked it but thought it was too expensive. I had a prototype of GlobalSearch (called SmartSearch back then) on my laptop and decided to show them that. They loved the product and the price and signed the order on the spot. At that time there was still three months of work left to complete, so fortunately they did not want to implement it immediately.

9. What are some of your fondest memories of the past 15 years?

**Steve:** My fondest memories typically involve watching the growth of people who started here years ago in entry level positions. Many of those people are members of our senior management team or running departments of their own. Each year more new hires join the team and seeing their development as technology professionals is what excites me about this job.



## Sam Young

Sam is one of the dynamic voices behind Square 9 Softworks. Delivering highly effective messaging across reseller channels, end-user communities, and outside agencies, Sam develops, drives, and executes communication plans that effectively support Square 9's overall marketing goals and objectives.

To learn more, visit [www.square-9.com](http://www.square-9.com).