



IDEAS ON LEADERSHIP AND GROWTH

RESPECT FOR TALENT

At Bithgroup Technologies in Baltimore, executives have embraced several practices to foster a dynamic and successful team. Respect for each individual forms the groundwork of the company's leadership style.

"When we hire people, they bring unique talent, unique service," says president, CEO and founder Robert L. Wallace. "So it is our job as executives to extract that skill set from them, to create an

environment where they feel comfortable taking risk. ... I believe in failure, quite frankly, because we grow with failure. So what we do as

executives is, we create the environment where people can feel free to fail."

Bithgroup executives also strive to meet one of the biggest management challenges in today's workplace, namely managing across generations.

"You have a much broader range of people working in terms of age and perspectives. The idea is you

want to provide an environment where all of them can contribute, whether they are in their 60s or their 20s," says Harry W. Holt Jr., EVP of operations.

That means tailoring company processes to accommodate people with various styles of work, communication and problem solving so that everybody's voice is heard and everybody "respects each other's thoughts and ideas, so they all can contribute and work effectively together," Holt says.

Respecting the potential of each employee also means facilitating professional growth. Bithgroup managers periodically assess employees' skill level and their ambition, and place the individual in a position somewhere in the middle.

"Like in the sports analogy, to be a superstar, you have to ... be put into a position where you are required to perform at a higher level than what you are comfortable with. We call that stretch, and we push that in our company," Wallace says.

Wallace, who embraces an open-door policy, says he is always ready to listen to dissenting opinions.

"I trust my team, so when they come to me and say, 'Bob, I really feel strongly about this,' then I listen very, very carefully because I trust their instinct," he says.

He also trusts his own instincts.

"There are situations where I do have to say, 'Okay, I have gotten the feedback, I have gotten the data, but I have a gut check and from a gut perspective, this is what I think we should do as a company,'" Wallace says. "I try to minimize those moments and go with the consensus."

Photos (L to R): Robert L. Wallace, President, CEO and Founder; Carolyn W. Green, Chief Administrative Officer; Harry W. Holt Jr., EVP of Operations; Amber J. Green, Director of Health IT and Human Services; Chris Hawkins, Director, Identity Services; Ryan Moran, Manager, Enterprise Services

INDUSTRY: IT
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 50
YEAR FOUNDED: 1992
WEBSITE: WWW.BITGROUP.COM



Bithenergy

Bithgroup Technologies



As an undergraduate studying mechanical engineering at the University of Pennsylvania, Robert L. Wallace began researching clean energy technologies. The marketplace at the time offered no job prospects in the specialty, so Wallace pursued different opportunities.

Then, in 2008, president-elect Barack Obama made clear that he planned to direct federal funds into clean energy technologies. Wallace jumped on the opportunity and founded Bithenergy.

The startup achieved fairly quick success, partly because it could draw from the experience of Bithgroup Technologies, which Wallace had founded 15 years earlier.

"We took an IT professional services model and we mapped it and applied it to the energy sector,"

Wallace says. "Most of our competitors were contractors, construction kind of folks. So our business model was totally different from theirs and, because of that, we felt that we were able to penetrate markets quicker than they could."

That's not to say growth and success happened without a few hurdles and hard lessons. The same engineering passion that had fueled Wallace's clean-energy vision for decades also blocked his first deals.

"One mistake we made in the energy space early on was, we were leading our deals with the technology," Wallace says. "What we were finding when you lead with technology ... is the market really doesn't care."

What the market cared about was Bithenergy's ability to deliver, sources of financing for deals, and whether the projects matched desired rates of return for investors and energy buyers.

"Once we put on our MBA hats and took off our

engineering hats, then we began to get deals done," Wallace says.

Since its inception in 2009, Bithenergy has installed 60 MW of solar projects, including projects "up and down the East Coast on landfills, brownfields. We are doing some really cutting-edge things," Wallace says.

By the end of 2016, Bithenergy had another 150 MW of projects in its pipeline.

Photo (L to R): Front row: Sabrina Igh, Administrator; Carolyn W. Green, Chief Administrative Officer; Alicia Singleton, Project Manager. Back row: Saju Markose, Corporate Accountant; Coretta L. Bennett, COO; Michael Boettcher, Energy Subject Matter Expert; Robert L. Wallace, President and CEO; R. Daniel Wallace, Director of Technical Sales; Corey Culbreath, Director of Energy Management Information Systems; Henry Cortes, VP of Operations

CLEAN GROWTH