Cover Story

ORBYTEL GROUP

YOUR PARTNER IN SCIENTIFIC INTELLIGENCE

Probably the biggest challenge in the healthcare industry today is the usage of scientific and clinical data in a strategic way. Most people consider the healthcare industry behind the times, seeing how the deployment of technological advances is comparatively slower in the sector. But with its awareness, people are now turning to scientific intelligence.

Scientific Intelligence supports informed decisions based on the knowledge acquired by collecting, evaluating, analyzing and interpreting scientific data. This process may sound really easy, but in fact is tedious once you get to it.

Dedicated to make it easier for medical, commercial, and business development teams, Orbytel Group provides AI-enabled, technology-driven solutions to manage and act on scientific intelligence.

Orbytel Group provides cloud-based software that helps medical scientists, marketing professionals, and business development leaders collect, manage, and act on scientific intelligence. Their software helps teams easily find, analyze, and summarize scientific data from different sources. This in turn supports R&D efforts to discover new therapeutics and/or find new uses for existing therapeutics. Their customers consist of most of the major global biopharmaceutical companies.

> We help teams gather scientific insights, identify and engage scientific expertise, perform comparative analyses of trial data, and translate this intelligence into investor-grade financial forecasts and narratives.

The Inception

While the business started about 11 years ago in 2009, it has changed during that time. Initially, the company provided professional services and supported M&A transactions with financial forecasts. As this business grew they began investing in developing home-grown tools to help manage an increasing volume of sensitive data and automate repetitive data handling tasks.

As their tools improved, the customers noticed and wanted access to them. And eventually this led them to make a strategic decision in 2016 to focus on the software exclusively. Moving from a services company to a software company was a difficult transition from an organizational and operational perspective. The team had to change their mind-set, alter their internal operations, revamp the sales, marketing, and account management functions, and more. It took a couple of years for them to work out the operational kinks and get accustomed to a product development culture. It was a steep learning curve for everyone.

"Our growth has been pretty steady and largely based on word-of-mouth. We have been focused on working with large companies and refining our product."

Coming from a professional services background, the Orbytel team views account management and customer support as strategically important. This has helped them have nearly perfect customer retention for 8 years and organic growth through word-of-mouth.

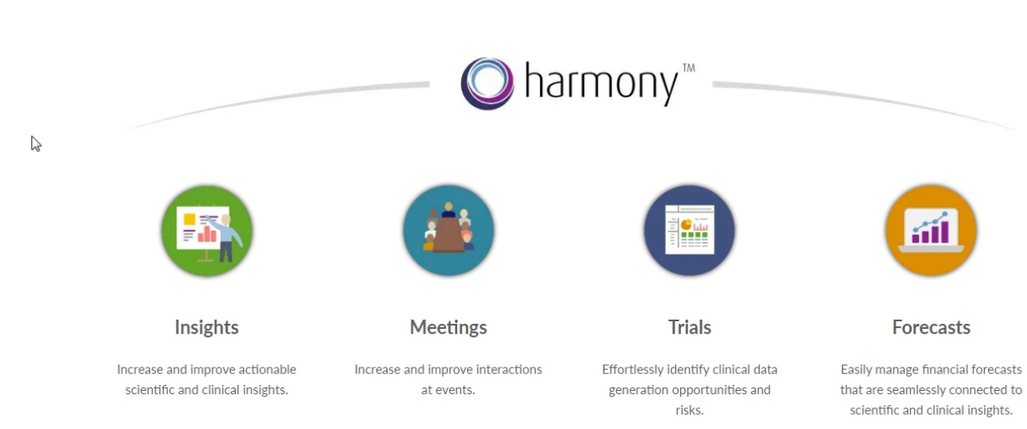
"At the end of the day, what has helped us survive all the ups-and-downs so far are the good working relationships with our customers."

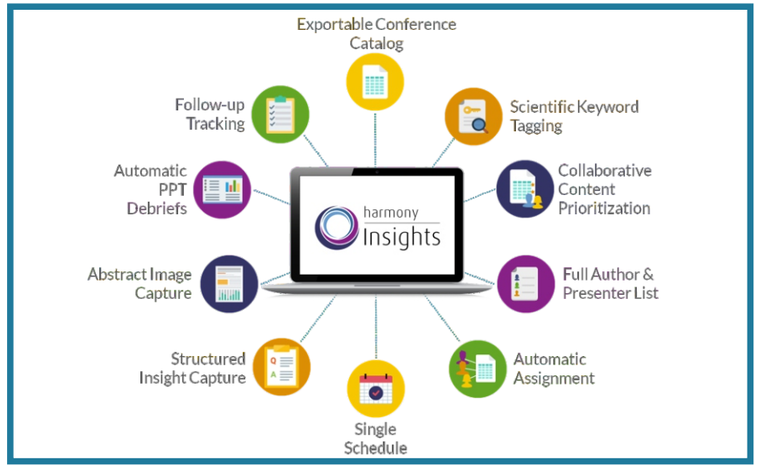
The Products and Services

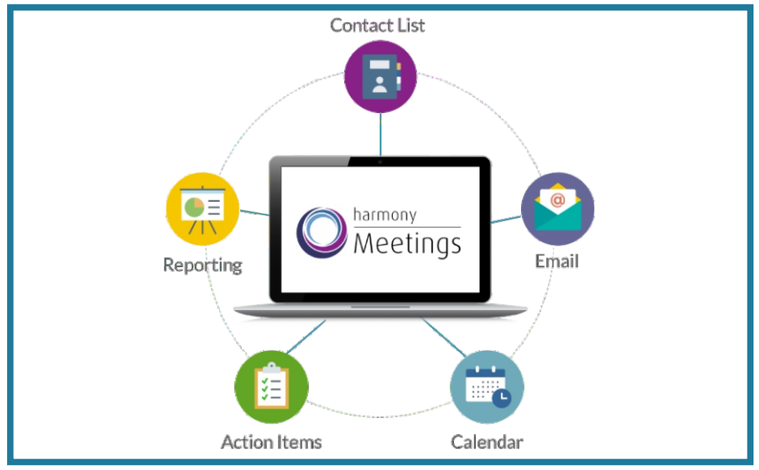
Orbytel Group has several integrated products that support teams with different aspects of scientific intelligence. Their products revolve around a common core -- a comprehensive ontology (data structure) that organizes and standardizes scientific information so that it can easily be comparatively analyzed. They employ advanced analytics, natural language processing (NLP), and machine learning (ML) that they have been refining for the past 5 years to make this happen. This core forms the foundation for their products: Insights, Meetings, Trials, and Forecasts.

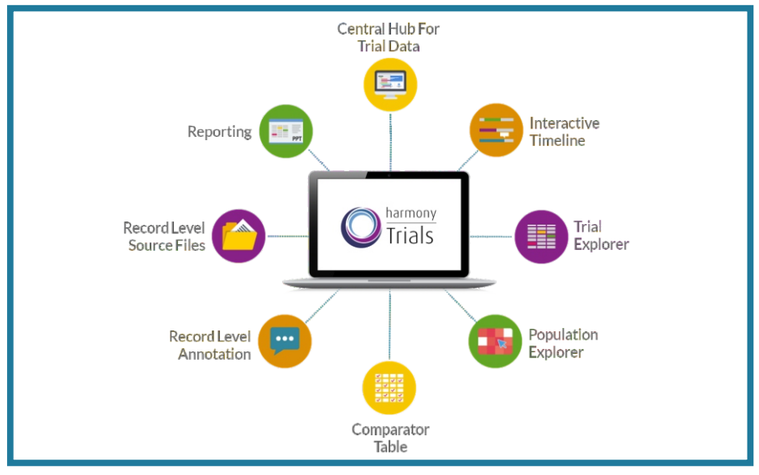
Insights helps teams identify, review, and summarize relevant scientific content from scientific abstracts and publications. **Meetings** helps teams collect scientific input from scientists. **Trials** helps compare and contrast clinical trial data across trial-arms and/or trials. And **Forecasts** helps translate scientific intelligence and understanding into financial considerations and scenarios.

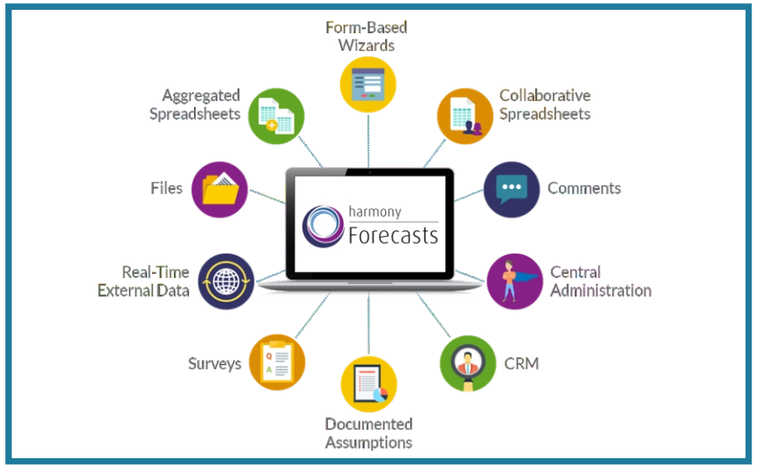
The fundamental difference with their solution is that they have a single data structure and a single code-base that supports all of their products. And that means if you are











looking at a financial forecast, you can literally connect every dot between a high-level assumption and a set of data points that may be in a scientific paper. Its seamless and intuitive...no moving between applications or dealing with different UIs, etc. It is a single application with a single user-interface. This difference enables Orbytel to have a comprehensive, end-to-end solution for scientific intelligence -- beginning with a scientific abstract and ending with a financial projection. Finally, their highly structured data structure has enabled them to embed AI in various areas.

At the product level, each product has a full-set of features that were developed through close partnership with the biggest global pharma companies. So, our products tend to be intuitive for teams and address most pain points right out-of-the box.

The Road Ahead

There is a lot of work to do towards that goal. The team is trying to balance what they think is “cool” with the business needs and practical implementation concerns of the customers. The customers tend to be cautious with new technologies and features. So, it becomes mandatory for them deliberate a lot and discuss potential development areas with the customers to help the team align their efforts with their needs. It's a balancing act.

For the past years, most of Orbytel Group team’s time has been focused on improving their NLP and ML engines. This work is largely in the background for their customers, but it's pretty exciting. The team is working towards offering an API that will allow people to use the AI component of their software independently. Essentially, this will allow for customers to access structured and processed data across medical conferences, PubMed, and clinical trial registries based on their scientific interests.

The Team

“I think taking care of employees entails helping them do their best work, developing their skills in a manner that will help them achieve their longer term goals, compensating them fairly, and ensuring their hard work is appreciated and connected to the success of the company.”

Culture is one of the most important things to establish. Team members and teams change as a company evolves. But, culture needs to stay steady. At Orbytel Group, they have a flat organizational structure and entrepreneurial environment. Team members have a high degree of autonomy and accountability with clear goals and timelines. They communicate openly and honestly and the leaders maintain this by striving to provide transparency on company decisions and financials. They have very few formal meetings, and when they do they are short and for making decisions. All of this translates into a team that gets a lot done with minimal stress and still has plenty of time to have fun outside of the office.

Be cheerful, loving and helpful… people will pay you in kind.

Listen more and talk less… no one learns anything while talking.

Be wary of giving advice…. the wise don’t need it and fools won’t heed it.

Do not equate money with success…. what counts most about success is how it is achieved.

Be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and wrong… sometime in life you will have been all of these.

> “AT A HIGH LEVEL, WE ARE TRYING TO MAKE SCIENTIFIC DATA EASIER TO MANAGE AND ACT UPON.”

Leading the Way
Murt Abuwala | Founder

Mr. Abuwala started off as a chemist working in enzyme kinetics and high throughput screening at a small pharmaceutical company in the late-nineties. Through a bit of luck, he discovered something with commercial potential in his first year which exposed him to the “business-side” of science, which he became interested in. And shortly thereafter he left the lab and joined a strategy team at Microsoft that focused on helping venture-backed companies further develop business plans.

Following that, he went to a large systems integrator (Accenture) and mostly worked on process mapping and enterprise software implementation. And then he joined a start-up biotech company and eventually became one of its commercial heads. After its IPO, he started and led teams at two large biopharma-specialized management consulting firms. And then he started Orbytel Group. It has been a wild ride.

