

Synergic Partners: Spanish big-data pioneer

Analyst: Katy Ring

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Synergic Partners offers a services portfolio around data engineering, big data and data science. The company focuses on business use-case projects for large multinationals in Europe – for example, undertaking projects around customer insight, operational analytics, fraud prevention and IoT projects for smart cities.

The 451 Take

Within Spain, Synergic Partners is a compelling competitor, with its strength of experience and fast time-to-market delivery. It focuses on providing data engineering, data quality and data governance expertise to multinationals that have business issues requiring a big-data approach. For the next few years, it should be in a good position to continue to grow – it will be able to offer services to its clients and prospects at prices that its larger competitors will struggle to beat because of their larger cost base.

Context

Synergic Partners was set up in 2007 in Spain, and is privately owned by its original founders. The company is a consultancy that initially focused on data management and governance, and later evolved to specialize in data engineering, big data and data science. It has offices in Madrid, where it is headquartered, and Barcelona, as well as a sales office in Zurich.

Synergic Partners' customers are typically European multinationals. It has 50 employees and revenue of €5m (\$5.4m), but expects to reach €8m in 2015, with 100% of the growth being big-data and data science projects. Synergic Partners' staff is predominantly based in Spain. Its

contracts per customer range from €150,000-1m per year.

Services

Synergic Partners helps its client companies in all industry sectors by solving business problems via its main cross-industry competencies, such as:

- Customer insight/analytics.
- Operational analytics.
- Risk and fraud prevention.
- IoT.
- Mergers and acquisitions.
- Innovation.
- Financial governance and compliance.

Synergic Partners provides consulting services and offerings such as advanced customer segmentation, churn prevention, retail behavior analytics, dynamic pricing and predictive risk scoring, among others. The company also has IP in its data models and algorithms (for example, in buying-propensity predictive models), and has accelerators that support the deployment of complex analytics projects.

The company is conscious that it is developing a new discipline, so it offers customers a big-data program and roadmap around the client's business priorities, spanning deployment services for big-data architectures that use Hadoop distributions and components from Cloudera, Hortonworks, MapR and Spark; the provisioning of big-data services to deploy data lake environments; data science analytics services; big-data governance services; and in-company training. Indeed, with skills shortages a key challenge for many customers, Synergic Partners provides a training program called 'from data miner to data scientist,' to help the customer organization develop its internal skills.

Synergic Partners also has its own cloud for big-data infrastructure, used for test beds or to develop services as part of the company's own R&D investment, including a big-data lab. The company also uses the cloud to provide analytics as a service for clients, offered in partnership with infrastructure providers that can support all elements of the data stack (big data, data science, data visualization and data engineering) – either on-premises or from the cloud.

Strategy

Traditionally, Synergic Partners has partnered with technology vendors such as Oracle, Informatica and IBM. For big data, the main partners are Cloudera, Pivotal, Talend and Tableau, among others, but the company is technology-independent. Indeed, the company prides itself on mastering disciplines, not products, so each consultant will be familiar with up to 10 technologies.

Partnering is important to the company, not only with technology providers, but also for priority access to knowledge. Proof of this commitment is the strategic alliance as an industry affiliate the company has with the Institute for Data Science and Engineering of Columbia University in New York.

Synergic Partners has an internal practice to train talent. It has had to focus on this as it has created the pioneering big-data team in Spain, taking people from a software engineering or statistical background. The important thing is to gather a balanced team for the client. It participates in Data Science Spain, a community of data scientists in Spain that had 617 members in early March.

Sales

Like most consultancies in this area, Synergic Partners works with two different types of decision-makers: for data quality and data management projects, the customer is the CTO or IT department, but for big-data projects the customer is actually business executives outside of IT looking to implement a service quickly from the cloud.

In 2010 the company was largely undertaking proofs of concept where the customer tended to be more on the technical side and wanted a roadmap to the production phase. Nowadays, most projects start with a pilot, which is then taken to commercial availability, and then to production level. Not many projects have yet gone beyond this to scale and become mission-critical. For big-data projects to take that next step and become mission-critical, there needs to be policies and tooling for data governance, to make sure everything in the data lake is both secure and accessible.

Synergic Partners is flexible with its pricing, but likes to price per project or outcome, working on an end-to-end project with a long-term roadmap. The company also undertakes risk-based or success-based projects. For example, in 2015 the company expects to announce the launch of a joint company with a customer.

Competition

Synergic Partners finds that its main competitors are either the global technology consultancy players, such as Accenture, IBM and CSC, which have a business base around data warehousing to protect, or the large business consultancies that focus on digital channels, such as PwC and Deloitte.

Until 2012, one of Synergic Partners' close competitors was Neo Metrics Analytics, a Madrid-based consulting firm specializing in big data and predictive analytics that had started its international expansion to several cities in Latin America. However, Neo Metrics was acquired by Accenture's Spanish business, and its offerings were integrated into Accenture's Analytics Innovation Center in Barcelona. Other European-headquartered competitors include Capgemini and Atos, but within Spain itself, Synergic Partners is well differentiated by the fact that it is a small Spanish company focused on big-data projects, with fast time-to-market capabilities.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Synergic Partners has a strong focus on big-data technologies, and has created a good client base in Spain among multinational clients, where the combination of its small size and wide experience make it an agile and feisty competitor.

Opportunities

There could well be opportunities for the company to turn some of its accelerators into SaaS offerings, delivered in partnership with IaaS providers, to deliver packaged analytics-as-a-service capabilities.

Weaknesses

One of the main weaknesses facing all consultancies in this area is the shortage of skills available in the market to support growth. However, Synergic Partners is taking this challenge seriously, and is creatively working with clients, academe and industry bodies to help build capabilities within their organizations and its own.

Threats

The main threat to the company may come as the market for big-data projects matures further, and its multinational customers seek the scale and offshore resourcing of the large global consultancies.

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