

Offshore Outsourcing - Building Processes and Identifying Suitable Projects (Part 5)

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Offshore outsourcing will affect your infrastructure and your people. Companies have formal and informal processes in their development organizations. Some are documented many are not. When you outsource your service provider will not be savvy to your processes or your work standards. Every interface or facet of your development process will need to transform or change to accommodate any offshore outsourcing. Assumptions will no longer be valid as time and distance come into play. Leave nothing to assumption instead start redesigning your processes afresh:

- Create a Software Engineering Process Group
- Map all Software Processes and standards as they exist
- Identify all stages in this process
- Define inputs and outputs at all stages
- Identify the interfaces between stages
- Identify all participants in each stage
- Identify criteria for moving from one stage to another stage
- Identify checks and balances performed at each stage
- Identify all standards and infrastructure processes that are used - coding standards, check in and check out process for defects, Configuration Management, Change Management, Acceptance, integration and build etc.
- Identify dependencies on other functions- budget allocation, sanction, procurement, systems and network administration, HR, Finance and Accounts

Once you map the as is process you start designing the process to what they will be. The interfaces are important as interactions and handovers take place at the interfaces. How will these be impacted when you have a remote team? What would be needed to facilitate these interfaces to ensure that work gets checked in appropriately? Your focus is to track your parameters of importance:

- ✚ Time
- ✚ Cost
- ✚ Scope
- ✚ Performance

While you leave people management to your outsourcer.

Involving other functions can be extremely critical. One Company engaged an offshore service provider for a major Software development program. The OSP (Offshore Service Provider) was given the go ahead to hire 30 consultants and start the first phase of the project. The Program Manager could not get a commitment from its own Procurement Agency and it took 30 days for equipment to finally be sanctioned and ordered. Worse the Program Manager was unaware that certain legal clearances were required before the equipment could be shipped overseas. That took another 15 days. Finally he failed to get his Sys Admin in the loop early on so when the overseas team wanted to get into the network they were denied access. It took some time before the Admins could ensure the proper type of access could be provided. This resulted in a delay of over 60 days a period in which the team was practically idle.

Once internal processes have been mapped they have to be re-engineered to accommodate the overseas team. Some interfaces would be added and most stages would be redefined. The

entry and exit criteria at each stage would change suitably to involve formal acceptance procedures. The participants would also change.

The check in and check out, configurations Management and other processes would have to be suitably modified.

The next stage would be to identify the work to be outsourced. The best job that can be outsourced initially is one which has the least variability. Projects such as Testing, Quality Assurance, Maintenance, Porting, and Internationalization of code are ideal for remote outsourcing. Variability will require frequent changes and close communication and if both companies are new to each other and distant this will stress the work to the point of instability or being entirely dysfunctional.

A leading Company outsourced a piece of work to a CMM certified organization and nine months down were ready to pull the plug as the program seemingly did not work. Wiser counsel prevailed and after a careful analysis the Company stepped back and changed the type of work that was being outsourced. The result was a dramatic turnaround.

It is important to understand that when you outsource the OSP has no experience on your job. They themselves will go through a learning curve. Make a provision for that learning curve.

Make a presumption that your OSP is inexperienced. Therefore, first identify projects that would match that inexperience, then as the OSP gets more experienced with your work and environment identify projects that are more complex.