

Managing Outsourced SW Projects

Lesson Learned

Manoj Singh, PMP

Management

- Have top down commitment and support for outsourcing
- Very important to have a experienced Project Manager
 - Managed Virtual Teams
 - Managed International Projects
 - Respects and understands cultural work place differences
 - Has very good communication skills (cream on the cake – if familiar with local language)
- Document outsourcing process and have quantifiable goals
 - Measure and report results
 - Most companies now CMMI Level III and above certified

Prelude to Outsourcing

- Vendor evaluation – geography, language barrier, cost, matured processes, quality, history, infrastructure, CMMI compliance
- Project Portfolio analysis
 - Projects that qualify for outsourcing (example maintenance contracts is a good candidate)
- Planning and installation of infrastructure
- Periodic review of performance and ROI

Planning

- Clear SOW (T&M, Fixed Price (preferred), Schedule, Deliverables, Penalties, etc)
- Identify the phases of project life cycle to be outsourced
- Agree on tools, technologies, and standards
- Synchronize onsite and offshore agreed upon project plan dates and deliverables
- Document and track all expected risks with mitigation strategy
- Have offshore Tech Lead work with onsite team for at least 2 months, during requirements and design phase
- Clear accountability to each task in the project plan (R&R)
- Synchronize delivery processes

Communication

- Consider offshore as part of the your team (no them vs. us)
- Establish reliable conference bridge and networks between locations
- Very important to communicate regularly – clarify expected deliverables, requirements, expectations
- Have minimum of two status meetings a week (time and day convenient to both teams due to different time zones)
- Dependencies and milestones for deliveries expected should be monitored in the project plan

Technical

- Request offshore contractor to assign Software Architect early on in the project as onsite liaison.
 - Make sure that onsite liaison is intimately familiar with requirements, detail design, and delivery processes
- Develop extremely detailed design and review it with offshore team for clear understanding of all artifacts.
- Sometimes better to have multiple code drops within iteration for quality assurance
- Conduct acceptance test of vendor deliverables prior to system test, have exit criteria's

In Conclusion

- Be committed – winning attitude
- Good learning experience
- IT/SW development outsourcing has been around for many years – it is a very mature sector
 - COTS is the trend and SW has become a commodity
- Use your contacts to learn more about SW outsourcing
- References:
 - <http://www.soft-outsourcing.com>
 - <http://www.cio.com/research/outsourcing/>
 - <http://www.outsourceglobal.org/conference.htm>
- Have fun!