

Case Study

Dorset Software: driving transparency and accountability across government

RM Education



RM Education is the leading provider of ICT software, services and infrastructure to the UK education market. It maintains a reputation for exploiting the capacity of technology to improve teaching and learning.

Solution Snapshot

RM wanted a company which could provide development expertise, could respond very quickly to requests for temporary skilled developers and with whom RM could build a long-term relationship. It selected Dorset Software.

Key Benefits

- Use of Dorset Software developers allows RM to work to a capped budget
- RM can maintain seamless continuity of software development work
- RM can more easily manage the peaks and troughs of development demand
- Productivity can be increased to guarantee projects are completed on time
- The fixed costs associated with permanent employees are reduced
- Skilled development consultants adapt quickly to new technologies

"We have developed an excellent relationship with Dorset Software. It is honest and easy to do business with."

Chris Clements, Director,
RM Education

The Challenge

Back in 1996 with a large programme of work, RM was just beginning to master a new and immature development skill set. To bolster its efforts and help ensure that projects were completed on time, RM needed a source of development expertise in the new tools and technologies.

RM turned to the market to identify a company that could provide experienced and proficient temporary developers. More recently, the IS department needed flexible resources to complement its in-house, permanent development team. RM needs to be able to access reliable, skilled developers on demand.

The Solution

RM wanted a company that could provide development expertise, could respond very quickly to requests for temporary skilled developers and with whom RM could build a long-term relationship.

Chris Clements, IS Director at RM explains the choice: "We selected Dorset Software as they provided a guaranteed source of technical quality. We wanted to build a relationship with a company which invests in its resources, training its staff not only in development skills but also in 'softer' skills and Dorset Software proved ideal. Even though our requirements have changed we still continue to use Dorset Software."

The Benefits

Using Dorset Software developers has brought many benefits to RM. "Using developers from Dorset Software, as and when we need them, allows us to work to capped budgets and easily manage the peaks and troughs of demand. It is an effective way of recruiting highly skilled, temporary development resources."

He adds "Working with Dorset Software helps us to achieve seamless continuity: to ensure the machine keeps working and the wheels keep turning. It also enables us to increase productivity and guarantee that projects will be completed on time."



DORSET SOFTWARE

The Challenge

Back in 1996 with a large programme of work, RM was just beginning to master a new and immature development skill set. To bolster its efforts and help ensure that projects were completed on time, RM needed a source of development expertise in the new tools and technologies. RM turned to the market to identify a company that could provide experienced and proficient temporary developers.

The challenge more recently has been the IS department's need for flexible resources to complement its in-house, permanent development team, to cope with the peaks and troughs of demand for its services. RM needs to be able to access reliable, skilled developers on demand.

RM wanted to find a company that understood its development environment, the tools and technologies, guarantees quality and shares its values and passion for technology.

The Solution

Looking for a solution, RM compared a wide range of alternative sources of temporary developers. They wanted a company that could provide development expertise, could respond very quickly to requests for temporary skilled developers and with whom RM could build a long-term relationship.

"We have chosen to carry on using Dorset Software Developers as and when we need temporary development resources and will continue to do so."

Chris Clements, Director,
RM Education

Chris Clements, IS Director at RM explains the initial choice: "We selected Dorset Software as they provided a guaranteed source of technical quality. We wanted to build a relationship with a company which invests in its resources: training its staff not only in development skills but also in 'softer' skills and Dorset Software proved ideal. That was 10 years ago, and even though our requirements have changed we still continue to use Dorset Software."

Now RM use Dorset Software staff for two main reasons: First, if they are below headcount they use up the allocated budget to cover a temporary head count and second, when the Board allocates extra budget to ensure on time delivery of a project this can be used to cover additional temporary developers.



Dorset Software consultants allow RM to respond to the changing demands of the education market.

Technology Snapshot

Over the last 10 years RM has demanded many additional, skilled resources and has always turned to Dorset Software. Initially only used in the IS department, Dorset Software developers now work across the organisation.

Utilising a range of tools and technologies including SQL Server, ASP.NET, MS Reporting Services, C#, SharePoint and BizTalk developers are involved in a wide variety of projects at RM. These range from improving and rewriting old applications to developing new web and desktop applications.

More specifically, projects include: working on a new credit card facility on RM.com to enable improved online purchasing; a brand new website for an RM group company, tts.com; improved management reporting; improvements to the HR system; an organisation-wide 'eforms' process, using business process automation to move towards a paperless office and finally, developing an on-time delivery system, which includes complex code to change the way systems work to prioritise orders for dispatch.

Methodology

When an additional resource is required by RM, the IS director or the relevant Project Manager simply contacts the Account Manager at Dorset Software and everything is taken care of. The Account Manager suggests developers based on their areas of expertise and their 'fit' with RM.

All other mundane issues like travel and accommodation are arranged by the Dorset Software support team. Chris Clements observes "We consider Dorset Software as an extension to our development team. We simply pick up the phone and always receive a prompt and relevant response."

Developers from Dorset Software are all highly intelligent and analytical. Well-trained in a wide range of development tools and technologies, they work across a variety of organisations and understand the need for flexibility and adaptability when working in diverse organisational cultures. Dorset Software developers are so well accepted by RM that they are called 'Dorsets' as a term of endearment.

Chris explains RM's opinion: "Dorsets are very highly regarded at RM. They integrate well and when a new team member joins they are readily accepted by IT staff. We all have respect for them based upon our extensive experience of their technical expertise."

Benefits

Using Dorset Software developers to fulfil a resource or skill shortage at RM has brought many benefits. "Employing 'Dorsets' is an effective way of recruiting highly skilled, temporary resources," Chris suggests. Utilising temporary resources when demand peaks means that the fixed costs associated with permanent employees are reduced.

"Working with Dorset Software helps us to achieve seamless continuity: to ensure the machine keeps working and the wheels keep turning. They enable us to increase productivity and guarantee that projects will be completed on time."

Employing temporary resources virtually always brings risk. Chris highlights why using Dorset Software helps to reduce this risk: "As much as anything can be guaranteed, it is almost guaranteed that Dorset Software developers will meet our expectations."

Chris values RM's relationship with Dorset Software. "We have developed an excellent relationship with Dorset Software. They are honest and easy to do business with. We have been working with them for over 10 years now and we have not chosen to do anything different. This is not an accident."

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