
SILICON SYSTEMS

Managed Service for Silicon Systems

CLIENT

Silicon Systems is a Wokingham, U.K.-based company delivering leading-edge, highly supported IT solutions. Flowmation, its primary product, combines Digital Asset Management (DAM) and Project Management tools to help advertising, print and publishing firms easily organize their assets into projects that are accessible to both local and remote project participants.

CHALLENGE

Flowmation was initially developed by staff in-house. However, as Silicon's user base grew, end-user support and customer requests for more functionality increasingly began to absorb more time and effort. The current team could no longer handle the requests, and at the same time it did not seem possible to expand it quickly and at reasonable cost within the UK.

Silicon started to consider the outsourcing option. "It was our first outsourcing experience so we had a certain amount of apprehension about the whole process," - says Neil Dobson, Managing Director of Silicon Systems. "Extensive research showed that Minsk, Belarus was an ideal location for the outsource team and to make sure that we were going to be working with the best partner we looked in detail at five outsourcing companies." After a pre-selection process the list was shortened to three firms with one of them being Intetics Co. - IL-based software development company running an Offshore Development Center in Minsk.

In order to make the final decision, Silicon visited Minsk to assess each of the three companies. They were compared on the basis different criteria but according to Neil Dobson "the most important factor for us was the relationship with the Technical Leader. We really wanted to select someone we felt we could build a relationship with and someone who inspired confidence."

After Silicon had several meetings with Intetics Technical Lead, his enthusiasm and communicative skills made the decision to choose Intetics a fairly straightforward one. "The fact that he was supported by a very able client management team who provided a good, attentive service simply added to our confidence," admits Neil.

Offshore Dedicated Team (ODT) was selected as a cooperation model for distinct advantages it provides: expert management consulting, complete process setting, project and relationship governance on Intetics' side and full control over the offshore team given to the Client.

SOLUTION

After the decision of partnering with Intetics was made, both companies had to tackle quite a number of critical issues to ensure the project success.

Even before the contract was signed, Intetics started to create the ODT team as soon as Silicon announced they were ready to cooperate with us. All new members were hired according to the initially discussed plan, Silicon actively participating in the selection process. The Project Manager was chosen on the grounds of his previous technology experience. In May 2007, the team already consisted of 5 people and grew by 4 more people by September 2007.

From Silicon's perspective, one of the key challenges was making sure that as the team grew they always had high quality candidates coming on board. "We were heavily reliant on the Technical Lead and subsequently the Project Manager in making the right choices for us. However, we soon came to appreciate that they had very high standards and we always felt that they were protecting our interests and this was very reassuring." – says Neil.

The second problem to be solved concerned the transfer of knowledge from the UK team to the ODT team. This was dealt with through the discussions that Silicon's and Intetics' Technical Leads had throughout the transition period. Intetics also set all the needed processes, the infrastructure, training, management activities, reporting, and team motivation. Team members perceived themselves as a real extension of the Client's staff and very soon could deeply fathom the specifics of Silicon's business and the product itself. Silicon found the transition period to be really seamless, enabling them to focus on the core issue of the product development.

Another biggest challenge was to set an effective development process allowing regular product releases. To a large extent, this has been made possible through involving Intetics' top management in continuous project and team monitoring. All technical aspects are examined by means of code and architecture reviews, software inspections, audits, and project plan reviews. All the project processes are absolutely transparent to Silicon. "Intetics works through a number of communication channels and the response has always been first class - the time difference of two hours between the offices has barely been noticed," acknowledges Neil Dobson.

RESULTS

Together Silicon and Intetics have managed to build a proficient and highly motivated development team. So it's no surprise that the quality of the code that has been created in terms of design, resilience and stability is at a very high level. As it is inevitable with software, issues do arise from time to time but both companies

make a real focus on getting these resolved quickly and where other software vendors seem to get bugs fixed in months or weeks, we get it resolved in days or hours. This brings a huge amount of confidence to Silicon's clients. As Flowmation is a web-based solution and is central to how clients operate, having this quick turnaround is extremely important.

"The resources acquired from Intetics are very cost effective and, perhaps even more importantly, the quality of service has always been first class. Without a very close working relationship and focus on quality, projects suffer from errors which can wipe out any initial cost savings. The offshore dedicated team has become a real extension of Silicon's in-house staff producing regular product releases and bringing considerable operational cost savings," – concludes Neil upon several years of cooperation with Intetics.