

Challenging consulting paradigms to deliver real client value

A few years back I was leading a team of consultants in conjunction with an embedded team at my largest client. We had just completed a multi-language reporting phase for the clients' worldwide sales and logistics operations. This included management dashboards and a series of early warning systems that enabled our client to increase the bottom line on their balance sheet.

As we moved the project to phase two, Ali, our designated report writer, had come on board to develop the reports we required for a complex area of the clients' financials. After a morning of client site orientation, Ali received a call from to help a business user sort out some reporting issues, finalised what he was doing and headed out to help. That was the last we saw of him that day.

When the team met to share the day's learnings. Ali reported that the business users were not embracing the toolset ad-hoc capabilities due to a lack of training. He had actually spent the day moving about the business solving issues and providing on-the-job training. He reported of breakthrough experiences for many of the people that he had helped and of their deep appreciation that someone was taking the time to help them. Subsequently, the majority of them were able to completely retire Excel and fully use our enterprise reporting solution.

I asked our team about their opinion on why we hadn't been asked for this service before. The answer was: "Business users believe that IT never has time for them as they are constantly developing new functionality". I realised that this was the exact agenda that I had been managing our team to deliver the client a surprise free delivery in time and on/under budget.

We had to make a decision: Should Ali's time be taken up by report development (leading to an increased perception of "IT doesn't have time..."), or be spent growing the reporting capabilities of the client by allowing on-the-job training for ad-hoc reporting.

I then met with the client and we agreed that growing the organisational capability was the better option. With minimal governance, we established a hotline and defined a process that would lead to a decision either to train the user on the spot, implement and roll out new functionality within a short timeframe, or flag the larger ideas for the subsequent budgeting process.

Incoming requests for assistance were documented, prioritised and confirmed with the client's IT manager. High and medium priority items were addressed first with other regular items delivered against a defined schedule.

The highest business-identified priority was to use a train-the-trainer approach to develop staff at their desk on their given toolset. A steering committee was then formed where business departments and IT mutually determined the priority and order of subsequent work packages.

Ali was assigned the management of what we termed a competency centre for reporting and the client reported a significant uplift in reporting usage, a leaner process to extract information from their massive data pool, and an increased ability for decision making (without IT intervention).

DataMovers was founded to harness the innovation from Ali's achievements and to deliver a mature offering to the Brisbane market: Build capability beyond technology.

To learn more contact DataMovers at info@datamovers.com.au or 1300 859 968.