Customer, SI and Technology - a Collaboration for Success

Overview

Projects rarely execute 100% according to plan. Unexpected obstacles can require the project team to adapt quickly, so that every project still succeeds with a happy customer. How can a series of complications be transformed into a win-win for both you and your customer? The most important thing is partnership.

The Challenge

This project was our first opportunity to work with this Fortune 500 customer in the consumer products market. The system that they wanted was very complex. Some of the highlights include:

- Wonderware System Platform
- Wonderware InTouch
- Wonderware InBatch
- Wonderware Information Server
- Customized Databases and Stored procedures
- Integration with SAP
- Development based on existing customer standards
- 13 different PLCs
- 25 different process areas

Naturally, we wanted deliver a system that exceeded expectations and was ready according to their schedule. As we strove to meet this goal, some of the obstacles we faced were dramatic schedule changes, heavy customization, and complicated standards. Both the customer and Avanceon's team quickly realized the scope and complexity of the project was beyond what was initially proposed.

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The Team

This project's success stemmed from the synergy between Avanceon and the customer's collective resources. Both parties approached the project as collaborators. Project partnership is marked by:

- The desire for all parties to win
- The desire for all parties to be treated fairly
- Ownership of issues and problems that are your own (and the impact they have)
- Flexibility to adapt to issues and problems that are not your own (to minimize the impact)
- Regular two-way communication of status, observations, and risks

Avanceon's goal is to build this type of relationship with every customer.

The Avanceon Solution

Over the course of the project, we used our technical expertise in Wonderware and our standards-minded approach to work with the customer, understand their standards and determine how best to deliver an effective system. Additionally, we were able to make strategic improvements to their standards to expedite development and expand functionality.

We used an Agile development methodology to present and review working deliverables at regular intervals. This promoted customer buy-in and early revision. The feedback from each review was incorporated into the next review. As the project progressed, Avanceon was able to understand the customer's needs and anticipate their requests.

Our project management philosophy also complimented our spirit of partnership. This included weekly status reports and meetings to discuss the challenges faced by both teams and how we could work together to overcome them. These regular, honest and open conversations established a rapport between all members of the project team and contributed to the overall success of the project.

The Result

We recently completed the original scope of the project. All customer feedback has indicated that they are very happy with what we've delivered. We are still working with the customer on a daily basis to support the original scope while delivering new scope. Along the way, we've partnered with this customer on other opportunities and specifically thanked their Project Manager and Plant Engineer for helping create such a pleasant and collaborative working environment.

Conclusion

All projects evolve. And some projects evolve so much that that the final deliverables are nothing like the original understanding. In these cases, it isn't a solid technical approach, or even a solid project management philosophy that ensures everyone wins (though those things do help).

Robust collaboration determines the project's success. Through partnership we can transform a potentially contentious customer/vendor relationship into a "WE" relationship. Through partnership, we can have a solid understanding of each other's needs so that we can support each other. Through partnership, we can adapt to the changing needs of a particular project or situation. Through partnership, we can ensure that everybody wins.