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Making The Complex Simple
Around People, Process And Technology

Client Success Summaries:

The following client successes represent a sampling of the types of projects we've assisted our clients with:

- *Integrate ERP with Business Process to Leverage ERP Investment, Improve Operational Efficiency, Reduce Inventory and Cycle Times*
 - *Create Operations Infrastructure for a High-Tech Start-Up Company*
 - *Define Business Processes for Migration to New Configurator Application*
 - *Define the User Interface for a Rule-Based Software Application to Properly Configure and Validate a Customer's Orders*
 - *Reduce Time Required To Validate A Customer's Order Requirements by 80%*
 - *Requirements Analysis for Capital Equipment Manufacturer to Correct Operational Problems with their Configurable Products*
 - *Lead Post-Merger Integration of 3 Companies into 1*
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Integrate ERP with Business Process to Leverage ERP Investment, Improve Operational Efficiency, Reduce Inventory and Cycle Times

Industry: Engineer-to-Order Capital Equipment Manufacturer

Role: Project Manager

Number of people working on Assignment: 6 people

Duration of Engagement: 9 months

Problem Presented:

Prospect contacted our firm about the need to define a "part numbering system" for a 35-year old company. Just before the initial client meeting, we learned that there were also significant issues with respect to inventory control. During the initial client meeting, the CEO identified his concern that the company had not benefited from its investment in ERP and that the use of the ERP system was really an afterthought.

Assessment and Steps:

While conducting an assessment, we learned that the company had far more than a “part numbering system” issue. Here’s a snapshot of what we found:

- The ERP value-added reseller (VAR) had installed the software and conducted some remedial training on the different modules that had been purchased.
- There had been no attempt to define a business process or identify how the software was to be used in the course of running day-to-day business operations.
- There was no assessment on the part of the client or the VAR to determine “what processes and tools would need to be in place” to successfully implement the ERP system.
- The client used each individual supplier’s part number to identify a part meaning there was no uniform part numbering system.
- The inventory valuation was estimated to be off by as much as 50%
- There was no process for managing the release and changes to bill of materials once they were in the ERP system—they could be updated by anyone at any time without notice
- That the ERP system was not part of the mainstream business processes—it was completely separate from the day-to-day running of the business.

We assisted the client in the following areas:

- Defined and implemented a company-wide part numbering system; assisted client with migration to new system in the ERP system as well as with a physical inventory
- Defined a release and change control process to manage data being entered in the ERP system
- Developed and implemented an electronic document control system to automate part number requests, change requests and change orders.
- Developed a business process for managing the development and release of a documentation package for the company’s highly-engineered products
- Developed business process for using each ERP module to ensure that all business activities were seamlessly transacted through the system
- Trained employees to use the systems and procedures and watched them be successful doing their jobs with the ERP software.
- Put a process in place to manage any and all issues that were encountered relative to the new processes to ensure that answers to problems were identified and documented so we could close the issues.

Results Achieved:

The company’s manufacturing cycle times for its highly-engineered custom products dropped from approximately 12-16 weeks to 4-6 weeks; the raw inventory levels dropped by 50% freeing hundreds of thousands of dollars of cash; and the ERP software is now mission-critical to running the day-to-day business. And, most importantly, the company was now more “process dependent” than “people dependent.”

The CEO of this small company also did one very gutsy but absolutely courageous thing. He could have stopped spending money with our firm after about 4 months time but chose to have us stay on for an additional 5 months to make sure the new processes and procedures really took hold in the company. When we met with him 3 years later, he expressed his delight about how successful the project had been and how much better his company was running. Everything that we had done for them has continued to persist over time.

Create Operations Infrastructure for a High-Tech Start-Up Company

Industry: Large Format Color Printer

Role: Project Manager

Number of people working on Assignment: 1 consultant/programmer, 9 client personnel

Duration of Engagement: 4 months

Problem Presented:

Client needed assistance defining an operational infrastructure necessary to transition the company from being a start-up “product development” company to a complete sales, manufacturing, service and distribution company.

Assessment and Steps:

- Created a set of Document Control procedures covering part numbering, change control, control of purchased components
- Defined user interface for an On-Line Document Control System
- Converted existing departmental part numbering systems into a unified corporate system
- Released design using procedures and on-line tools created for this client

Results Achieved:

Met client’s requirements for completing effort; built an operational infrastructure consistent with culture and business needs. Client had appropriate tools and processes to accommodate multiple sites spread throughout California as well as support outsourced manufacturing. Suppliers had access to latest drawings. Engineering Change Orders could be approved and incorporated in Engineering documentation and ERP within a few hours.

Define Business Processes for Migration to New Configurator Application

Industry: Semiconductor

Role: Project Leader

Number of people working on Assignment: 6 client personnel

Duration of Engagement: 2 months

Problem Presented:

Client had to convert data from an existing computer application to a new computer application for approximately 1,000 custom semiconductors. This conversion effort would take place over a period of several months and involve a great deal of complexity in terms of queuing special requests, identifying problems resulting in things being put on hold while being transferred to be worked in separate work queues, etc. Our firm had to be able to monitor the status and progress of a part’s conversion during its migration through the process.

Assessment and Steps:

Worked with the client to design a process that anticipated and helped to manage the conversion effort. This process recognized that the likelihood that a part could be successfully converted the first time through the application would be quite low, which turned out to be true.

Results Achieved:

The effort paid off—the conversion effort turned out to be as arduous as we had anticipated. Our processes helped us accurately monitor status and progress.

***Define the User Interface for a Rule-Based Software Application
to Properly Configure and Validate a Customer's Orders***

Industry: Semiconductor

Role: Business and Technical Expert Assigned to End-User

Number of people working on Assignment: 2 – client staff; 3 IT staff; 7 Accenture consulting personnel (project managers and programmers)

Duration of the engagement: 7 months

Problem Presented:

Information Technology and outsource I.T. consulting staff were not appropriately identifying and addressing the end-users' business and technical requirements for a new "Configurator" application. Our client needed help in defining the business and technical requirements for a sophisticated "configurator" application used to define a customer's requirements for custom semiconductors as well as assistance dealing with programming personnel.

Assessment and Steps:

Helped client document their business and technical requirements, reviewed and resolved critical business issues related to the application design, provided focus for a software application that not only addressed internal departmental needs but also looked to future business needs, worked with internal IT and Accenture project managers and programmers to resolve issues, ensure that client's needs were properly communicated and addressed. We helped our client through the trials and tribulations of a major software development effort, an area that was foreign and overwhelming to our client and the organization.

Results Achieved:

Our client obtained software applications that truly reflect their business and technical needs.

***Reduce Time Required To Validate A
Customer's Order Requirements by 80%***

Industry: Semiconductor

Role: Project Manager

Number of people working on the assignment: 3

Duration of the engagement: 5 months

Problems Presented:

Client requested that we investigate the use of imaging technology to help him reduce his order acceptance cycle time from 5 days to 1. Upon meeting with his department manager, it became apparent that imaging technology would not help him resolve the cycle time issue.

Assessment and Steps:

Conducted a Needs Assessment to understand what areas were adversely impacting the client's cycle time. We learned that expert knowledge needed to validate a customer's order requirements was dispersed throughout this Fortune 500 semiconductor manufacturer's organization and was not documented in any formal way. To validate a customer's requirements required leaving voice mail and e-mail messages for the "experts" who were already burdened with meeting current customer needs.

Working with two of my client's team members (his department manager and a staff member), we designed and helped our client implement a "Process and Packaging Capabilities Guide" as a centralized repository of expert knowledge to be used as a reference document for Specification Review Department to validate a customer's technical requirements.

Results Achieved:

My client's cycle time reduction goal was met: we reduced the cycle time from 5 days to 1. Customer Order Management was able to eliminate nearly a week of administrative lead time, which improved their competitiveness and customer satisfaction.

Requirements Analysis for Capital Equipment Manufacturer to Correct Operational Problems with their Configurable Products

Industry: Semiconductor Capital Equipment

Role: Project Manager

Number of people working on Assignment: 20 people in Sales, Marketing, Manufacturing, Order Services, Production Control and Finance

Duration of Engagement: 2 months

Problem Presented:

Our firm was referred to client as being an "expert" who could help them implement a configurator application—a tool to select features and options associated with a broad and diverse set of product lines for a semiconductor capital equipment manufacturer.

Assessment and Steps:

Prospective client asked our firm principal to assess an "off-the-shelf" configurator application that the company had purchased, by attending a 2-day seminar on this product. Within ½ day, it was apparent that this application would not solve their problem. They asked if I would work with them anyway using this application. We refused—we don't take assignments that will not solve our client's problems. They were shocked that a consulting firm would refuse a paying customer. They asked what they should do. We suggested they engage our firm for purposes of conducting a Requirements Analysis so we could:

- Understand their actual business problems and needs
- Determine the best course of action

They agreed.

Results Achieved:

For the first time, the client had a clear picture of their actual requirements and a strategy for addressing these requirements. The client was able to get their money refunded for the inappropriate computer application.

Lead Post-Merger Integration of 3 Companies Into 1

Industry: Semiconductor Capital Equipment

Role: Project Manager

Number of people working on Assignment: 30 people in Sales, Marketing, Manufacturing, Order Services, Production Control, Field Service Operations, Facilities, Materials, I.T. and Finance

Duration of Engagement: 2.5 months

Problem Presented:

COO contacted our firm to lead the integration of 3 companies into 1. We were given a clean sheet of paper to develop and immediately begin implementing the initial phase of integrating the companies.

Assessment and Steps:

Goal was to develop a task list for each area that (a) captured only those tasks essential creating a seamless transition to a single operating company, and (b) monitor progress against the task list.

There were a number of challenges in this project:

1. The senior management team from one of the acquired firms was promoted to nearly all of the senior leadership positions in the “new” company creating resentment and some ill feelings amongst the team in the company that had undertaken the acquisition.
2. All 3 companies had done business internationally and, as a result of the merger, had up to 3 offices in each country where they had a presence—this was particularly challenging for Field Service Operations.
3. The senior leadership team did not inherit a healthy situation—there were a number of urgent product and operational challenges that needed to be resolved; the company integration had to be facilitated while resources were focused on correcting major issues
4. A decision was made to outsource manufacturing of all products produced in the U.K. to Asia to reduce costs; worked with U.K. leadership team to develop outsource service level agreements
5. A new CRM system needed to be specified to address operational controls needed to manage the Field Service Operations; we helped Field Service Operations develop the requirements document for the new system.

Results Achieved:

This project exceeded senior management’s objectives to create “one company” and set the stage for a number of follow-on projects within different departments.