Suggestion of Accountability for Offshore Development

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Abstract

As outsourcing play a more and more important role in modern software development, especially in offshore development, highly effective accountability of projects will be definitely necessary. We will go through several feasible ways of improving accountability for offshore software development in this paper.

1. Introduction

As foreign offshore market is expanding into new geographies, offshore development is getting more and more global, and vendors that engaged in offshore development are always thousands of miles away from their buyers. If the project is huge, hundreds of people will work together for their customers in the other side of the world. Naturally, issue of accountability of the projects is coming into consideration and turning into a qualitative evaluation of projects.

2. Approaches

Responsibility, concrete control, standards, edges of stages or process, metrics, from management to mathematics, from physical measurement to distribution of job, approaches to accountability are diverse and distinct. The following means are the most common and feasible ones.

2.1. Retaining control directly

Internal professionals and management should be involved during development. Professionals or development manager should be involved in the early stages. Making them engaged in the whole decision-making process, will be tremendous help in seeking the real requirement of the project, as well as monitoring and supervising the development process. Therefore, the comfort levels and control [1] of the buyer will be increased.

Management also should be directly involved during implementation to ensure that the vendor delivers what was promised. Many vendors will promise to go after the requirement specification of the buyer, but during implementation, some of the promises are not carrying out.

2.2. Clear design standards

As the business engineer made out the standards, the failure rate should be matched, or rework of the process should be conducted. Clearer standards, developers will be easier to adhere to the coding specification accurately, and as a result, lower rate of rework.

2.3. Objective metrics and process boundaries

Also, buyer should establish objective metrics and patrol process boundaries to ensure their providers accountable. Clear process boundaries enable you to settle disputes about distribution of work. Developers will have a clear mind about what they ought to do. Metrics provide quantifiable and indisputable measures of quality and performance of the product, telling you whether you got what you paid for. When combined, you will be able to know whether you have received what was promised. Of course, there must be enforcement in case of the vendor misses a metric. There should be a reimbursement and rework.

However, at the meanwhile, accountability cuts both ways. If a buyer asks for a function that is outside the scope of the original specification, the buyer must pay for the extra work [2].

2.4. Process Knowledge Management

As companies push more and more work in the outsourcing model today, the governance structure is expanding, and there is a much closer watch on the

providers. This trend arose from buyer's fear of losing control over the process knowledge [3]. There is always a sense among buyers that they will probably lose their knowledge base through outsourcing, particularly when providers need to bring the process out of the office.

So, it will be necessary to rotate employees from both sides for some time, which would help to spread the correct process knowledge and have a better control on it.

2.5. Long-term business relationships

This may be the most desirable among companies.

As buyer provides ongoing training and challenge, both sides need to demonstrate flexibility. The spirit of cooperation and understanding come in that both side should make adjustments in keeping with the shared goal. It is a good start that the buyer is determined to keep the relationship successful and the supplier is committed to the buyer's success. Both of them should truly want to see each other succeed. For years of cooperation, willing to listen to each other with open minds is of most importance, as well as the partners understand and act on current business conditions.

Based on the understanding of market forces and shared goal, trust among companies could be built, so as the long-term relationships.

3. Conclusion

As discussed above, clear standards and detailed control are always effective and practical approaches to improve accountability the offshore software development, and we believe, trust that built upon understanding and share goal among the buyers and venders will be the most powerful support for accountability in the long run.

4. References

[1] Beth Ellyn Rosenthal, "Three Suggestions for Successful ADM Offshoring From an Exec Who Learned the Hard Way", August 2004.

[2] Peter Bendor-Samuel, "Accountability Helps Turn Lead Into Gold", Everest Group, 2000.

[3] Kathleen Goolsby, "Seven Trends in Offshore Outsourcing for 2007 and Why They Matter", Everest Partners, L.P, November 2006.