CASE STUDY

Legacy App Modernization using Offshore IT Managed Services

Introduction

Our case study is about an Australian B2B SME that found themselves struggling with a legacy web application that had been written many years ago but had only recently been considered as part of their "secret sauce" – something that could be leveraged to gain a competitive advantage.

The Issues

1) Most of the developers who had built the platform no longer worked at the company; so, the internal proprietary knowledge had walked out the door

2) The platform was built in a language that was outdated; so, it was a challenge just maintaining it, let alone expanding on it or scaling it to match the company's future vision for it

3) Its interface was dated and not user friendly, the feature set hadn't kept up with new technology or what was now standard in most other applications; so, it did not offer a lot of value to external customers or internal stakeholders, and was quickly being superseded by SaaS platforms out in the market

4) The application didn't have its own integration capabilities, meaning it was a challenge, if not impossible, to have it automate and integrate with other platforms like Email, ERP, WMS or TMS

5) While they did have inhouse software development resources, they were mostly interns or junior developers who already had their hands full putting out fires and maintaining the application, with little bandwidth or the right skills for a significant revamp

6) IT staff in Australia are in high demand, and so employment costs have risen as much as 21% in recent years. On top of this, there's was a global pandemic, everyone's business was feeling the crunch, and so investment costs were a key consideration

The Impact

1) Existing customers were getting frustrated with the application and account managers were regularly getting complaints which made it a challenge for customer retention

2) New customers weren't getting excited by the application in comparison to what they knew was in the market, and this wasn't helping the company gain new business
3) The company missed many opportunities to leverage the application in terms of gaining efficiency and productivity, upselling or cross-selling to existing customers, or exploiting new tech trends like data analytics

The Options

- As-is: Continue to firefight using the platform and incrementally fix things.

- Buy: Go out to the market and find an existing SaaS that'd do what they need

- Revamp: Keep the existing system while doing a significant revamp and upgrade to get it nearer to what's in the market

The "as-is" option wasn't really feasible – they were already losing business because of the application and the account managers were struggling to appease the existing customers who hated using it.

The "buy" option had potential but would require significant time to figure out what their true internal and external needs were and then evaluate the market for options. The downside, however, was that it would hold them hostage to a SaaS vendor, and if this application were to become their "secret sauce" then that might raise challenges around building intellectual property and staying ahead of the competition.

To address the most immediate concerns, a "revamp" seemed the best way to go. They could address some of the hot-spot issues impacting their existing customers while capturing the low-hanging fruit in terms of new features and integrations that could help them win new business and start exploiting new technology.

In terms of addressing the six key issues, this option would address most of the first four, but the last two – a lack of internal resources, expensive IT employment costs and a tight budget – would still need to be resolved.

This became a perfect opportunity to leverage offshoring to the Philippines.

By establishing resources offshore, the client could:

- Engage more resources of higher quality, at a significantly lesser cost

- Engage a broader set of skills and scale up and down as the project evolved

- Engage resources who are culturally aligned to Western countries with strong English-speaking communication skills

- Expand the development hours-per-day using a different but adjacent time-zone, allowing the product roadmap to move faster

- Do all of this without worrying about the HR aspects of more headcount

More resources | Broader Skills | Lesser Cost | Culturally Aligned | Strong Communication Skills

The Right Partner

The client selected Taurfish as their offshore partner for a few reasons:

1) It was founded by a career executive with decades of experience in the IT industry, so they would have a tech partner that could help contribute to their IT strategy and not be a transactional vendor.
2) The account managers were Australian, so they understood the client's culture – both geographically and in the workplace – and removed any potential language barriers during the crucial commercial stages of the engagement.
3) The company had over a decade of experience in the Philippines, which meant they understood the complexities of screening, recruiting, and managing people in a country with very strict labor laws.
4) The company had a pool of resources that could be quickly evaluated and deployed for the project, allowing them to start in as little as two weeks.

The Engagement Model

Given the fluidic nature of the project, the client first began with one UI/UX developer to start mapping out the existing platform and come up with a fresh new interface that would wow clients and fix some of the friction points they complained about when using the platform. This would also make the platform more mobile-friendly.

Our UI/UX developer worked with various stakeholders across the business, as well as integrating feedback obtained directly from end users, busily gathering information to create options for a new design. These designs were then assessed by internal and external stakeholders, and a final approved design was created for use across the web application. This process was completed in about three months.

The client then engaged us as an IT consultant to begin assessing the existing platforms in the market and benchmarking their legacy application against the competition. This would allow them to identify the gaps in the legacy application compared to the market, prioritize improvements based on client needs and the competition, and then develop a product roadmap - starting with an MVP that could be released in a few months and bring some instant relief to everyone involved, and then a longer-term set of releases that could catch up with the market and be leveraged down the track. The output from this phase was a comprehensive report delivered to their board of directors and was completed in about 6 weeks.

For the third stage, the client engaged us to bring on board two full-stack developers, one senior and one junior, to work with the internal team and implement the new UI/UX designs. The team would use Agile Scrum, which would allow knowledge sharing between the in-house and offshore teams, breaking up the work and assigning it to the resources with the right skills and experience, as well as bringing in teams from other IT departments to ensure the development project plan considered architecture, infrastructure, security, and scalability concerns.

With the offshore team in the Philippines and only a two-hour time difference, there was enough overlap for teams to have daily huddles and do sprint planning and retrospectives, while allowing the offshore team to continue developing into the evening, effectively giving the client a "follow the sun" approach to development.

After the bulk of the development was completed for the MVP, the client then scaled back to the one senior full-stack developer to finish the major release, subsequently retaining them on an ongoing basis to continue releasing key features.

Throughout the engagement, the Taurfish account manager has worked closely with the client's senior management and board of directors to remain aligned with their strategic and operational plans, helping them identify and resolve issues as they arise, and playing a vital role in bridging the relationship between the offshore resources and the onshore in-house team to make sure that the client sees the outcomes they wanted, and that the engagement remains win/win for everybody.

Conclusion

Offshoring not only helped the client deliver their product roadmap faster, with better quality, and with significant cost savings compared to doing it entirely in-house, but it also allowed their business leaders to focus on keeping their existing clients happy while also gaining new business as Taurfish managed their expanded IT resources in the Philippines.

With digital products and software quickly becoming core to every single business, regardless of their size or industry, offshoring your IT services to a trusted partner can help accelerate your IT programs, allow you to explore new business revenue streams through platforms and communities, and create relevant, technology-enabled and unique value propositions for your customers – all without the headache of having to manage an IT team and the hefty price tag that can come from doing it inhouse.

We have flexible delivery models to suit your business needs, whether it's a single designer to freshen up a dated application or an entire team to build, deploy and maintain your next super-app.

To learn more, visit www.taurfish.tech and [contact us](#) – we can help you get started with offshoring in as little as two weeks.