



Software Evaluation Method

Case Study – Stramit Building Products

Stramit Building Products has been operating on the Geac FACT system running on Wang hardware for around 18 years. A project had been initiated to implement the Praxa Starfire system at Stramit. This solution had been imposed by Stramit's parent company and was met with significant resistance from both Stramit management and staff. The project had been running for around 18 months when it was finally cancelled, due to a significant blow out in projected development costs.

The new General Manager of Stramit understood the need for a new system to provide functionality to deliver his business objectives and was keen to have an inclusive evaluation to build organisational support for the new solution.

Intervention

Tethys Consulting was engaged to provide its evaluation methodology and facilitate the selection of the new solution. Stramit assigned a team of five people to the project who were available around 75% of the time.

A key part of Tethys Consulting's methodology is the development of a Case for Action to articulate the rationale for the evaluation and subsequent implementation projects. The Case for Action was developed using input from the branches around the company and refined with a key group of Subject Matter Experts. There were three crucial points:

- ❑ The current system was unsustainable, with obsolete technology that was an ever-increasing business continuity risk
- ❑ The business vision could not be achieved using the current system
- ❑ There were opportunities for business improvement through the implementation of a new system that would deliver cost reductions and increased revenues so that a

payback in less than 3 years was achievable.

The Executive Sponsor of the project was the General Manager. He participated with the evaluation team in a series of roadshow events around the branches, interactively explaining his vision and then developing the case for the new system. These were very positively received.

The team then developed its Mandatory Requirements and Selection Criteria and then proceeded to develop a Long List of vendors for consideration. This list was developed using reference material provided by Tethys Consulting. These vendors received a Request for Information (RFI) document that asked for responses aligned to each of the Selection Criteria.

Further information was sought from vendors to validate the responses to the RFI and a Short List of four vendors selected for further consideration. The team asked for functional explanations around a number of key areas, most notably product configuration. Discussions were also held with respect to Technical Architecture, Implementation Methodology and Service/Support. At this stage, some "showstoppers" were identified that discounted further vendors.

Finally, two finalist vendors were invited to demonstrate their products to the core team and subject matter experts, using scripted scenarios developed by the team. The purpose of these sessions was to further validate the suitability of the functionality and assess the "look and feel" of the products. It was also an opportunity for the vendors to understand more about the requirements and thus refine their implementation estimates.

The final recommendation was made using input from attendees at the demonstration. A unanimous choice of vendor was determined and this recommendation put forward.



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To supplement the vendor selection, an implementation programme that encompassed more than just the software implementation was prepared. This included technical training for staff who had previously not had any need to use a computer, data cleansing, rationalisation of product across the branches, etc.

Result

The Board endorsed the selection process and accepted the recommended software vendor.

Shortly after this, Stramit was involved in acquisition discussions with its main competitor. This resulted in a deferral of the implementation project whilst discussions progressed. In the meantime, this competitor conducted its own software evaluation, including the Stramit's chosen software vendor. The competitor has since selected the same software vendor; further validating Stramit's selection and the Tethys Consulting process. It is relevant to note that prior to Stramit's selection of the vendor, the competitor had not considered that vendor.

The acquisition has since faltered and both companies are now implementing the software very quickly because of the strategic and operational benefits anticipated.

The Client's Perspective

"We engaged Tethys Consulting to facilitate and project manage our software evaluation because we wanted an objective, well-supported recommendation that had broad support from all stakeholders. We wanted a solution for the long term that would solve our legacy system limitations and help us to dramatically grow the business.

Our people know our business intimately and have some great ideas about how things could be made better. They are experts in our business, not in software evaluation. By using the Benefits Realisation Approach provided by Tethys Consulting, their focus was on the business requirements and how well each

vendor satisfied those. They didn't need to worry about managing the project, consolidating documentation or managing the vendor liaison. Tethys provided templates that made the documentation faster to complete and checklists to make sure that we'd covered all the bases. Our team were provided with things that made it easy for them, like questions and discussion items for a reference site visit. This meant that all of our key resources were contributing, rather than one or more of them having to work out what to do, how to do it and then managing the mechanics of the project.

Tethys Consulting was totally committed to the project's success and achieving client satisfaction. The bottom line for us was a robust evaluation, a motivated implementation team and the groundwork for a successful implementation. Given the risks associated with major systems implementations, we see this as our insurance policy for success. We believe that we have made the right software decision and that Tethys' involvement was a major contributor to the success of the project. I strongly recommend Tethys Consulting and its Software Evaluation Methodology to companies looking to evaluate enterprise software."

Quentin Reid, General Manager

Tethys Consulting



Tethys Consulting specialises in the provision of processes to help our clients in the areas of Strategy Development, Software Evaluation, Effective Meetings / Workshops and Staff /Team Development. These areas are often linked, providing synergies across our projects.

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