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Enabling Next-Gen Online Commerce



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ENABLING NEXT-GEN ONLINE COMMERCE

by Chris Sapardanis

As the needs and expectations of online shoppers grow, retailers are pressing for increasingly sophisticated and capable e-commerce platforms to build their sites on. Behind the scenes, some Web developers and interactive agencies are meeting the demand by using external IT shops to gain highly skilled, less costly and more adaptable technical crews.

Client: Fry, Inc.

Challenge: Supplement their permanent staff level to take on new projects, while still maintaining high quality and rigid schedules.

Solution: An offshore CSC team of technicians and engineers trained in Fry's technology and framework, available to flexibly support client projects.

Results: Fry benefits from a large and experienced resource base and has the ability to ramp up or down technical support, as needed.

For 15 years, Fry, Inc. has led the way in developing award-winning e-commerce sites that helped define the industry. In 2009, online operations built by Fry will generate more than \$2 billion on a roster of clients that includes Godiva Chocolatier, Levi's and Whirlpool.

Fry's mission to deliver solutions, systems and insights that provide bottom-line value to their clients became aligned with CSC (at the time, First Consulting Group, later acquired by CSC) in 2006. Since then, the Ann Arbor, Michigan-based firm has tapped into our global network of technical expertise to reduce costs without sacrificing talent.

From pilot to partner

Hiring various contractors to assist with platform operations is nothing new for Fry. In fact, considerable growth has made it necessary. But in recent years, Fry has moved most of its contracted engineering work to CSC's Vietnam operations.

"We had more work than we could handle with the resources we had," says Sue Crawford, managing director, Fry. "We decided to look offshore because it was more cost effective, and we wanted to partner with a firm that could build a knowledgeable staff to come in and out of our projects as needed."

Fry wanted to supplement their permanent staff level to take on new projects, while still maintaining high quality and very rigid schedules. Initially, CSC's Software Services group engaged eight resources in a pilot to work with Fry's Product Development team on their Open Commerce Platform (OCP) product and Professional Services team (Web site implementations).

The pilot proved successful. Fry then moved on to a partner relationship with a larger group of CSC resources that received intensive training in e-business processes and technologies. The group has by now assisted on 12 Web sites for Fry clients.

"They were looking for us to get our resources onboard quickly, get them up to speed and trained on these very complicated projects," says Leslie Dennis, project manager, CSC. "We were able to do that. They needed the flexibility to handle the amount of work that was coming in."

Different time zones, same expectations

Common to any new offshoring relationship is the challenge of managing allocation and communications between long-distance resources and clients. Our Vietnam team of engineers and technicians work on day-to-day Fry projects, and they need to remain flexible enough to move, depending on priorities.

"These challenges are common to any offshore development house," says Sudheer Mahendra, CSC account manager. "Over time, however, we are seeing fewer challenges. And now this process has developed so well, that when Fry allocates a task to us, we basically just come back and deliver the work."

"Our team understands their technology and framework," he adds. "We've reached the position where we are supporting them the way they want. Whatever technical requirements Fry has, CSC Vietnam has those resources."

In house and offshore

Work is delegated to CSC Vietnam based on a high-level plan by Fry that determines how offshore resources are utilized. Each incoming task is assigned to a technical specialist who quickly establishes a timeline to finish the job.



"Our technical knowledge of Fry's platform and our ability to ramp resources up or down are critical to the success of this relationship," says Mahendra. "Whenever they want us to do something, we have a team that understands."

Typically, all projects are executed in the same manner, based on Fry's requirements. Development schedules are set by Fry based on their experience and expectations working with the offshore group. Team structure and training allow Fry to move resources and address highest priority needs.

"CSC has met our expectations," says Crawford. "A key is having Dennis here onsite. He helps us place resources appropriately, makes sure people are being utilized and that things run smoothly behind the scenes. Early on, we had a couple of missteps, but CSC has always made it right as quickly as possible. And we look forward to continuing our relationship." ■

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CHRIS SAPARDANIS is a senior writer for CSC's corporate office.



BUSINESS SOLUTIONS
TECHNOLOGY
OUTSOURCING

Worldwide CSC Headquarters

The Americas

3170 Fairview Park Drive
Falls Church, Virginia 22042
United States
+1.703.876.1000

Europe, Middle East, Africa

Royal Pavilion
Wellesley Road
Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 1PZ
United Kingdom
+44(0)1252.534000

Australia

26 Talavera Road
Macquarie Park, NSW 2113
Australia
+61(0)29034.3000

Asia

139 Cecil Street
#06-00 Cecil House
Singapore 069539
Republic of Singapore
+65.6221.9095

About CSC

The mission of CSC is to be a global leader in providing technology enabled business solutions and services.

With the broadest range of capabilities, CSC offers clients the solutions they need to manage complexity, focus on core businesses, collaborate with partners and clients, and improve operations.

CSC makes a special point of understanding its clients and provides experts with real-world experience to work with them. CSC is vendor-independent, delivering solutions that best meet each client's unique requirements.

For more than 50 years, clients in industries and governments worldwide have trusted CSC with their business process and information systems outsourcing, systems integration and consulting needs.

The company trades on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol "CSC."

CONTACT CSC WORLD: world@csc.com

VISIT: www.csc.com/cscworld