

What problem are we fixing by going offshore?

Most software development projects are either over budget, late, or never completed.

Of those that are completed, most fail to deliver maximum value to users and are not optimally designed, as most developers would concede.



These problems are not caused by the hourly rate of the developers.

The entire software development industry, including internal IT departments, must improve its productivity. And it is true; the salaries of the developers are the single largest component of cost. If productivity equals the value of the output divided by the cost of the input, lowering hourly rates should improve productivity.

Offshore companies would seem to be the answer to greater productivity because they offer low hourly rates. In practice though, larger productivity gains will be realized by improving the software development process. What needs to be addressed are the bigger issues of the late, over budget, scrapped before they were completed, hard to maintain, hard to use, obsolete, or “just not as good as they could have been” systems.

**By reducing complexity, we can reduce the time spent on development.**

Software code is too complex. Many, if not all, of the above problems are caused by this complexity. Charles Simonyi, former chief architect at Microsoft, has formed a company just to address simplifying code. But progressive IT departments are not waiting for new tools from Simonyi. Code simplification, and system simplification, should be integral parts of a re-engineered software development process. By reducing complexity we can reduce the total number of hours spent on development. At the same time, we can increase the value of the software to the user, a double boost to productivity.

If off-shore companies have a better software development process than local vendors or internal departments, they will win most of the business. If local vendors or internal departments have a significant process advantage, hourly rates won't be much of a factor.

## GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR PREFERRED VENDOR PROGRAM

By Jim Sherry

Recently at Devon Consulting, we've experienced a significant number of companies initiating Preferred Vendor Programs (PVP) in an effort to squeeze more value from their staff augmentation vendors. These companies all seem to have similar requirements:

- Control price
- Reduce time to hire
- Maintain/improve quality of human capital
- Preserve manager's time in interviewing and qualifying candidates

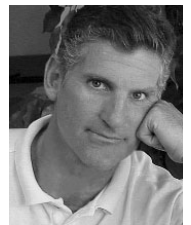
The most successful PVPs we have seen have a well-defined structure and approach. Success is often dependent on the definition of key performance indicators and the buy-in and participation of the hiring manager. Most programs only measure the

performance of the vendor, which may result in less value received by the client.

Successful PVPs incorporate metrics that can be used to evaluate all areas impacted by the program including the vendor, IT management, business customers and the PVP management team. Developing such comprehensive measures often result in improved performance by all vendors and ensures that everyone's expectations are met.

Devon Consulting's Performance Management Division has significant experience in the definition and analysis of PVP metrics and subsequent management of these programs.

For more information on our PVP capabilities, contact Jim Sherry at (610) 964-5769 or [jsherry@devonconsulting.com](mailto:jsherry@devonconsulting.com).



## MEASURE TWICE - CUT ONCE

Producing Clean Clinical Trials Laboratory Data  
By Tom Grundstrom



My father is a craftsman par excellence. When it comes to wood, he can perform miracles, turning rough hewn timber into exquisite furniture and discarded scraps into treasured family heirlooms. His craftsmanship is based more on art than science, but there is one primary tenant that governs his workshop. Measure twice – cut once. As a director of data management for a central laboratory providing clinical trials data to the pharmaceutical industry, my craft is based more on science, than on art, but the same motto still applies – measure twice – cut once.

Measuring data starts by asking some critical questions before the first patient sample is ever drawn. Will all of the samples be run on the same type of laboratory equipment, perform the same methodologies, and use the same reagents, under the guidelines of the

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## DIGGING DEEPER WITH BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

In recent years, many managers have been using “behavior based” interviews to more accurately select employees. Devon Consulting included.

Behavioral interviewing is based on the assumption that the best predictor of future performance is past performance in similar circumstances. Many contend it provides a more objective set of facts to make employment decisions as compared to other interviewing methods.

Traditional interview questions ask you general questions, such as; “Tell me about yourself.” Behavioral interview questions ask things like:

- Give me an example of a time when you had to be quick in coming to a decision.
- Give me an example of a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty.
- What have you done in the past to contribute toward a teamwork environment?

- Describe a recent unpopular decision you made and what the result was.
- What do you do when your schedule is suddenly interrupted?

To employ behavioral interviewing in your company, determine the skill sets you require for a particular position and think about possible scenarios that will require the candidate to draw on those skills. Possible categories could include decision making and problem solving, leadership, motivation and communication. Create questions based on those scenarios and document the candidate’s response. Keep in mind the situation the candidate describes, the objective to be accomplished in that situation and the results of the action.

Finally, consider a team interview approach to ensure an accurate assessment of the candidate’s capabilities to recruit the best addition to your staff.

Devon Consulting employs Behavioral Interviewing techniques to select temporary and permanent IT and clinical professionals. For a full list of our tried and proven questions, contact [dstrobel@devonconsulting.com](mailto:dstrobel@devonconsulting.com).

## THE HIGH COST OF HANDHELDS

By Matt Hamblen  
Computerworld, December 16, 2002

Gartner Inc. has a reputation for IT cost models that many IT managers find excessively high. But Gartner's most recent numbers for the total cost of ownership (TCO) of handheld computers could take some IT managers’ breath away. The Stamford, Conn.-based research firm says the average handheld TCO is a whopping \$3,000 per user per year, going up to \$4,554 if you add a separate wireless modem. How can this be, given that many pocket-size personal digital assistants (PDA) cost as little as \$300 off the shelf?

For the full story, visit [www.computerworld.com/mobiletopics/mobile/story/0,10801,76693,00.html](http://www.computerworld.com/mobiletopics/mobile/story/0,10801,76693,00.html). In the meantime, consider these tips to reduce the total cost of owning wireless and handheld devices:

### TCO Tips

**Match an end user’s needs to a device. Some users don’t need always-on wireless connections.**

**Use mobile management tools for uploading software, monitoring improper use and controlling security.**

**Use a middleware gateway that assists in profiling users.**

**Establish upfront training programs that reduce support costs down the line.**

**Standardize on infrastructure and hardware.**

**Limit the number of service provider relationships.**

**Support end users who really are mobile, not everyone.**

**Design by application, not by throughput. In other words, don’t design to the fastest network if a slower one will work for the application.**

Source: Gartner Inc., Stamford, Conn.

## SEMINARS IN CLINICAL RESEARCH

If you are interested in advancing your career as a CRC or CRA, or would like to expand your understanding of the basic elements of clinical research, the Association of Clinical Research Professionals’ Seminars in Clinical Research may be for you. Offered throughout the year, each seminar provides intensive, interactive training that is applicable to clinical trials. Topics cover the Fundamentals of Clinical Research, Intermediate CRC Training, Intermediate CRA Training, and exciting new seminars that focus on hot industry topics—such as Applied Ethics, FDA Inspection Readiness, Clinical Trial Budgeting, and more. For information visit [www.acrpn.org/education/schedule.html](http://www.acrpn.org/education/schedule.html).

## HOW TO RUN A GOOD MEETING

**Here are some tips on how to run a meeting:**

- **Don’t compete** with group members. Give their ideas precedence over yours.
- **Listen to** everyone. Paraphrase, but don’t judge.
- **Don’t put** anyone on the defensive. Assume that everyone’s ideas have value.
- **Control the** dominant people without alienating them.
- **Realize that** your interest and alertness are contagious.
- **Keep all** participants informed about where they are and what’s expected of them. Keep notes on flip charts or a board that everyone can see.
- **Check with** the person who owns the problem to find out if an idea is worth pursuing or if a proposed solution is satisfactory.
- **Give others** a turn at running the meeting. Those who learn to lead learn how to participate.

Source: Financial Times as seen in communication briefings Volume XX, No. 1

## CONDUCTING DATABASE RESEARCH UNDER HIPAA

April 14, 2003 is an important date in Clinical Research, as it marks the beginning of federal regulation of patient privacy. The HIPAA privacy rules change the regulatory framework under which database research in health care will be conducted. Many database studies that would be exempt from IRB review and informed consent requirements under the Common Rule will require careful design and implementation to comply with the HIPAA privacy rules.

The Association of Clinical Research Professionals recently hosted an audio conference of this topic on January 27, 2003 that presented an overview of the impact of the HIPAA privacy rules on the design, conduct and reporting of database research. Issues affecting public and private databases, existing and future databases were addressed.

An audio tape of this conference is available for purchase through ACRP. For information or to purchase the tape visit [www.acrpnet.org/education/audio1027.html](http://www.acrpnet.org/education/audio1027.html).

## IT JOB SKILLS AND SALARIES

What skills do you need to be a network manager? A wireless developer? What would you be paid? Check out ComputerWorld's roundup of IT positions from their monthly Knowledge Center special reports. See what skills and training you need and what salary you might be paid by visiting [www.computerworld.com/news/special/pages/0,10911,1825,00.html](http://www.computerworld.com/news/special/pages/0,10911,1825,00.html).



## IN SEARCH OF...AUTHORS

Have something to say and you're looking for a place to say it? Tell us. We're looking for industry professionals to provide insight into the struggles you are facing, what you've done to resolve those struggles or just plain share information.

Please respond to [dstrobel@devonconsulting.com](mailto:dstrobel@devonconsulting.com).

## HOW TO DEAL WITH CONFLICT

### To handle conflict among your team members:

- **Ask those** who disagree to paraphrase one another's comments. This may help them learn if they really understand each other.
- **Work out** a compromise. Agree on the underlying source of conflict, then engage in give-and-take and finally, agree on a solution.
- **Ask each** member to list what the other side should do. Exchange lists, select a compromise all are willing to accept and test the compromise to see if it meshes with team goals.
- **Have each** side write ten questions for their opponents. This will allow them to signal their major concerns about the other side's position. And the answers may lead to a compromise.
- **Convince team** members they sometimes may have to admit they're wrong. Help them save face by convincing them that changing a position shows strength.
- **Respect the** experts on the team. Give their opinions more weight when the conflict involves their expertise, but don't rule out conflicting opinions.

*Source: Making Teams Succeed at Work as seen in communication briefings Volume XX, No. 1*

## MEASURE TWICE - CUT ONCE continued from page 1

same SOPs? If not, the data cannot be combined without some type of correlation study and possible normalization algorithms. Those are both expensive and time consuming and may lead you to seek another provider. *Measuring twice entails asking very specific questions about consistency across all testing locations.*

A second question is just as important as the first one. Are there unique file and format specifications associated with this data? If some of the testing involves microbiology, questions as to growth media, standardized organism identification, susceptibility measures are no longer just science questions. If the data is not set up to be collected with a complete understanding of the output, the end result may not be possible. Similarly, if some of the testing is of a genetic nature, questions regarding the formatting and display of the raw data can often be more important than the analyzed data itself. *Measuring twice entails knowing everything possible about the file and format specifications.*

Once the data has been collected, measuring twice means ensuring that all of the data is clean and accurate long before being sent to the client. Almost any lab system handling clinical trials data will have edit check capabilities, but the important question seeks to know when those edit checks are instituted. The sooner the issue is discovered the sooner it can be resolved. If a physician is asked about a patient demographic the day after a visit occurred, he/she is much more likely to remember than if a couple of weeks go by. Consequently, edit checking should be instituted the moment the data is collected, if possible at the moment of data entry. EDC (Electronic Data Capture) not only allows physicians to use the Internet to fill out paperless requisition forms for laboratory testing, but more importantly performs edit checking when corrections can be made easily. *Measuring twice entails running edit checks as soon in the process as possible, and never entering data into a system that is known to be incorrect.*

In the same ways that my father practiced precision before any sawing began, the same philosophy applies in clinical data trials. Ask questions first, know as much as you can about file and format specifications and make sure the data is clean. Otherwise, you may be left with the equivalent of scrap lumber for your project.

Tom Grundstrom is Director - System Operations and Data Management for LabCorp Clinical Trials. He can be reached at [grundst@labcorp.com](mailto:grundst@labcorp.com).

## ENHANCED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR 2003

Devon Consulting is committed to providing continual technical development to our consultants and employees. We are therefore pleased to announce an enhanced training program for 2003 – Devon's Online University. This program is FREE of charge to our consultants and employees. We offer the latest in online learning technologies and the largest, most comprehensive library of online training courses. Our new customized site offers more than 1,200

courses from the world's leading producers covering Business Skills, Leadership and Management, Desktop Computer Applications, Information Technology and more. To participate, contact Meredith Kirkpatrick at 610-964-5723 or [mkirkpatrick@devonconsulting.com](mailto:mkirkpatrick@devonconsulting.com) to receive a user ID and password.



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## CONSULTANT CORNER



### CONSULTANTS OF THE QUARTER

#### IT Consultant of the Quarter (2003)

**Gene Fayusovich** has earned the distinction of Consultant of the Quarter for his ability to work quickly, independently and effectively. Gene was working for a client that had several critical issues related to an order processing system that needed to be resolved. With little guidance, Gene quickly rewrote the code to resolve the problem and as a bonus, drastically reduced order-processing time.

Way to go Gene!

#### Clinical Consultant of the Quarter (2003)

**Nicole Ramsay** worked successfully as a Clinical Assistant in the Regulatory Affairs group at one of Devon's pharmaceutical client sites. Our client was very pleased with her work and said "Nicole would be a benefit to any firm." As such, this month when her assignment came to an end, Devon placed her at yet another client site in the role of Clinical Assistant. She started in February with no time in between assignments. This is a success story for Nicole and Devon!

### MANAGER'S MINUTE



The best executives have frequent, regularly scheduled, one-to-one meetings with their direct reports. To build trust, be sure to allocate time to non-business issues.

## ChipChat!

is published quarterly.

Please submit your news, editorial, comments and suggestions to [ChipChat@devonconsulting.com](mailto:ChipChat@devonconsulting.com)