



- Outsourcing offshore is a viable strategy for SMEs
- A robust development process is extremely important
- Keep certain key parts of the work onshore
- Seek independent help if this is your first time



### Rowallan Software Services

Rowallan Software Services Ltd was established in 1994 in response to a need for realistic and practicable advice for busy IT departments and, in particular, development teams.

For further information contact us on +44 1234 345118 or visit our website at

[www.rowallansoftware.com](http://www.rowallansoftware.com)

**David Williams** is the IT Process Consultant at Rowallan Software Services



## Software Development Offshore

by David Williams

Whether you are an IT Department or an IT Vendor, sending some or all of your software development offshore is now a viable strategy for flattening resource loadings and taking out some cost.

Sadly though, for most SME's, simply packaging up a development task and sending it to a generic body shop in India, Bulgaria, China or wherever seldom produces deliverables that live up to expectations. There seems to be an almost religious fervour about not admitting this - but it is true.

By and large the skill pool available in these offshore destinations is larger and better trained than our own - so where is the problem? All too often the root cause is onshore rather than offshore. If your shop has a poor record on delivery or quality, why should you expect that trying to offload onto someone else will produce a miracle. It will not.

In order to buy something, you have to know what you want. That in turn means that some of the development process needs to remain onshore and in house.

Our experience is that the chances of success are higher if the requirements capture is done onshore involving at least some in house technical resource (as well as the user-stakeholders, of course).

You must OWN this process, and it

must be done well. It is your key technical input to the contract. A robust requirements specification leaves no doubt about what you are asking the offshore developer to do. Most offshore developers will happily accept change requests - but you will pay dearly for them. Always try to minimise downstream changes.

Beyond that you can abdicate practically ALL responsibility on technical and process decisions if you want to. Most reputable offshore companies are well able to do this to a high standard. However, you MUST supply resource to check all the milestone deliverables the offshore developer will send to you. Again, you can use onshore contract effort, but you must own the process. This is your only independent check that the contract is being correctly executed.

Finally be prepared to test and check the deliverables in-house. Signing off on the deliverables will almost certainly trigger a payment stage, so you need to be sure the contract is being met. The easiest time to rectify issues is at this stage. Once most of the deliverables are available, the offshore team will start to get broken up and re-allocated.

Working offshore should be a rewarding experience for anyone developing software. The secret is in following the correct process. If you don't feel confident about that, then get help before starting.

## The Kings of the Hill

by David Williams

Whilst writing the above, my mind turned to how, in the recent past, the central process of designing and coding a software application has increased in pace.

The new generation of software tools are very productive, whilst not exactly trivial to use. They engender a need for fewer, but professionally trained and accredited, software engineers. With these, almost generic, specialists focused just on design

and coding, who supplies the sector knowledge, product innovation and leadership?

Making software easier to create throws the initiative right back onto the business. Analysts able to link the skills of the programmer to the needs of the business become much sought after. Such people, at least good ones, are rare - so are they about to replace programmers as Kings of the Hill?