Software Performance Systems, Inc.

CASE STUDY

JCON: How Critical PMO Consulting Saved a Program in Trouble

Situation

In September 1997, the Department of Justice (DOJ) Joint Consolidated Office Network (JCON) program was plagued by a growing list of technical problems. Early JCON rollouts proved to be inherently unstable and complex to manage and administer. Additionally, the total cost of ownership was rising with increased demands for support and engineering. Faced with these problems, the Deputy Chief Information Officer (CIO) and the JCON Program Management Office (PMO) sought independent specialists to provide a fair assessment of the situation, and identify what must be done to get the program back on track.

SPS – Problem Solved.

The JCON PMO selected SPS to assess the JCON implementation and plans, and recommend a new architecture as appropriate. In close collaboration with DOJ functional and technical stakeholders, SPS re-validated JCON requirements, identified JCON design inabilities to meet the requirements, and proposed a candidate new architecture and approach. SPS tested the new approach in a laboratory setting to set a solid technology baseline. After a highly successful first deployment, the DOJ expanded and retained the SPS team as the JCON PMO enterprise architecture advisors.

Methodology

The SPS team was composed of several domain experts, each with expertise in the specific problem areas of the JCON architecture. The team's goal was to identify the hardware and software components in the JCON Baseline that should be changed to affect a standard JCON architecture that would be an efficient enterprise solution. The team's solution was also required to resolve the current JCON problems and provide a future strategic direction for the Department's office automation systems.

The team's approach was to work in close concert with key Department management and technical staff to conduct the project tasks. The team used existing JCON documentation and interviews with component technical and executive staff to develop a baseline understanding. This was further augmented with JCON business requirements developed through a Planning Workshop held with senior business executives.

The analysis resulted in a recommendation to redesign JCON with a homogeneous architecture for core-office automation services. Based on a better functionality match and industry trends, the JCON business units unanimously agreed that a homogeneous Microsoft Office systems architecture was the right choice for JCON II. This was actually considered a "leading edge" choice in 1997.

The team was next tasked with developing the "strawman" architecture for this new design. The Strawman JCON Architecture was developed using criteria identified in the Planning Workshop, technical research into

CASE FACTS

Sector
Federal Government

Organization
U.S. Department of Justice

Customer Profile
The "largest law firm in the world," consists of legal business units and non-litigating organizations including the FBI, Bureau of Prisons, and the Justice Management Division.

Business Challenge
Large-scale office automation program off to a false start. Early rollouts plagued with problems. JCON I program seen as a failure.

Solution
Bring in an independent consultant to troubleshoot the ailing program. Re-engineer the problematic architecture. Bolster the PMO with continued high-level engineering support.

Client Benefits
DOJ components could roll out a common solution with minor tailoring. DOJ could capitalize on saved time and money by not having to develop and implement a custom solution for each DOJ component.

mainstream office automation systems, case studies of major office automation implementations, and interviews and meetings with leading software vendors. Using the information gathered during the Design Workshop, the Strawman JCON Architecture was refined into the Target JCON Architecture.

After receiving approval from USDOJ executives, the SPS team developed a full-scale system design that included the identification of major components, interfaces to the system, testing strategies, and test plans. The design specifications were thoroughly tested in a lab environment that utilized a LAN/WAN, workstation, and server hardware, as well as software components that made up the new JCON II architecture.

Lessons Learned

Far reaching systems, such as JCON, require enterprise level technical analysis and enterprise level functional and technical consensus and leadership. Obtaining consensus at DOJ was difficult since the JCON business units each had independent IT organizations and budgets. For three months, SPS conducted interviews, group workshops, and documentation reviews. The original set of business requirements was re-validated, and found to be lacking in priorities since each business unit had their own high priority requirements. Without extensive use of facilitated group workshops and planning sessions, a consensus might never have been reached. However, with the help of this technique, the team managed to create a single, core functional specification that included requirements to all of the JCON business units.

"As a result of the outstanding work of the JCON architecture team, JCON has become a model mission critical office automation system which we are very proud to be implementing in the Department of Justice senior management offices and litigating components. As JCON is rolled out to the 20,000 target users, we expect the efforts of the architecture team to yield a reliable, secure and cost effective system through which the Department will be able to optimize the use of electronic legal and management tools in fulfillment of its mission."

—Mark Boster, Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Information Resources Management

Results

The JCON II Architecture was first deployed in 1998 in the DOJ Justice Management Division – the Office of the Attorney General. Despite great success, the team was immediately put to work on further JCON Architecture design and planning. As an independent group in support of the JCON PMO, the SPS team was not only able to provide the critical analysis needed to turn around the failing JCON project, but has also evolved to become the center of JCON Architecture and Design. Their effectiveness is proven by the ability of JCON architecture to scale from 25,000 to over 70,000 users with sustained performance, accuracy, and security metrics.

ABOUT SPS

Software Performance Systems, Inc. (SPS), a small business based in Northern Virginia, is a privately held information technology services provider. Established in 1995, SPS specializes in the design and integration of large web-based solutions for Federal, State, and Local Governments and commercial clients worldwide. SPS has been honored with many national awards, including: #10 ranking in the Computerworld Top 100 Best Places to Work in IT, Deloitte's Virginia Technology Fast 50 and North America Technology Fast 500, and as a SBA Exporter of the Year. More importantly, SPS solutions helped our clients win prestigious awards, including the Grace Hopper Federal Government Technology Leadership Award, the E-Gov Pioneer Award, the Excellence.gov Grand Prize Award, and the Government IT Agency Award for Excellence in Government. **SPS. . .proven over time.**