

## Metrics Case Study: Identifying Support-Hungry Applications

*How the deployment of a timesheet system, properly configured to address the way IT Production works, was able to identify the key business applications that were taking a disproportionate percentage of support time - and leading to application support cost reductions.*

### **The Challenge**

This Investment Banking organisation had over 250 people responsible for the support of IT Production in its various forms.

The IT Production budget was agreed annually with the business lines, and charged back as a “cost-price” to them, based on perceived utilisation of the IT Production Service.

IT Production was therefore a classic IT cost, and there was no provision for it to act as a separate profit centre.

IT manpower support costs were charged back to the individual business lines on a pro-rata basis, which did not take account of the level of utilisation of each resource, and irrespective of whether that resource was a DBA, system administrator, middleware specialist etc.



With multiple business lines, and a datacentre population that was growing by the hundreds every year, there was a real need to understand where the support costs were being utilised. Foremost among these costs was the cost of manpower resources.

### **Our Involvement**

Dennis Adams was involved when it was identified that the current Timesheet system being used for capturing Project time could be utilised for capturing IT Production support time.

Not only was this an unprecedented approach, but it would also enable IT Production to standardise its time capture toolset.

Although there was inevitable resistance to introducing Timesheets, and the implicit accountability that this involved, the deployment was aided by the fact that Project Resources were already using the same tool, and there was a policy of task rotation between Support resources (known as “Business As Usual” or “BAU”) and Project resources.

The challenge was to design a time capture system which would be easily understandable and intuitive, at the same time as enabling management to identify how resources were being utilised.

### **Approach**

Introducing a time capture process with technical support teams is both a technical and a psychological challenge. Historically, technical teams can be reluctant to use such systems. This can be for a number of reasons, including fear of how the data will be used.

Another potential barrier can arise if the design of the input categories (which is typically done from a project perspective, rather than a “BAU” perspective) is not seen to correspond to the way of working of the “BAU” team.

In order to address these understandable concerns, a series of briefings and workshops were arranged with the technical support teams, so that they could contribute to the design and implementation of the new timesheet system.

Although the initial assumption was that time information should be captured by technical resource (DBA, system administrator, middleware specialist etc.) it was possible to demonstrate that this would not provide the “client-focused” information that was necessary.

With the assistance of the technical teams themselves, a data entry method was developed which was structured by Application Name. This meant that technical teams were encouraged to enter their time not according to the task they were performing, but according to the client application which the work was on behalf of.

In addition to the above structure, the system was also able to enable the company to capture whether the work was being done out-of-hours or during normal business support hours.

## ***Benefits***

The inclusive approach, involving the technical teams in the design of the solution, meant that the timesheet system was considered to be a success from the very beginning with a high percentage of valid data entry.

This generated a number of recognisable benefits for the company, some of which had not been anticipated prior to the deployment.

- The time capture system helped the management identify where significant additional time was being spent on supporting systems, which had been delivered “gratis” in the past. This gave management a much more accurate indication of how stretched the technical teams were in certain circumstances.
- Being required to enter time sheet data by Application directly and indirectly contributed to a more “client-focused” culture in the organisation. Instead of viewing tasks primarily as technical activities, they were being encouraged to think of their work as delivering business value.
- For the first time, the organisation had solid evidence of the extent to which certain “support-hungry” applications needed significant support effort compared with others.

One of the significant consequences of introducing the timesheet system was that the IT Production team managers were able to engage directly with the application support teams for the “support-hungry” applications.

Equipped with evidence from the timesheets, they were able to successfully argue the case for improvements to key applications, which would result in reduced support effort, and enable IT Production resources to be allocated to supporting additional new applications coming down-stream.

This information also enabled IT Production to indicate to the business where the support effort was being expended, and enable them to quantify and validate their cost contribution. It also provided some incentive for highly support-intensive applications to be upgraded or decommissioned.

## ***Further Information***

Dennis Adams Associates does not disclose any client names, details, or any commercially sensitive data with third parties.

For further enquiries, please contact us via our web site at <http://www.dennisadams.co.uk> or email to [info@dennisadams.co.uk](mailto:info@dennisadams.co.uk).