Establishing A Distributed Project

Background

The client is a niche Financial Services IT Consultancy in London. The client had been requested by one of its own clients to develop a prototype "personal wealth management" website based on a best selling book.

The project had a limited, inviolable budget and short timescale. Access to the end-client was also highly restricted.

Our brief was to establish the project according to Prince II principles. The project was to use some in-house resources in New York and London whilst subcontracting the bulk of the effort.

What We Did

Initially we followed a standard process of confirming the project brief and then developing the Project Initiation Document (PID) based on the Prince II methodology. This included developing a detailed MS Project schedule and associated financial budget, developing standards for reporting and documentation and implementing configuration management processes to manage project deliverables.

There were two significant additional activities during the start up process:

➢ Assessed the in-house resources' skills against the needs of the project to identify the additional skills required. Time and budget constraints required work be subcontracted to suppliers from the Indian subcontinent. The time and cost efficiencies of this approach were agreed to outweigh the additional risk that a third location and time zone presented to the project. We defined and agreed a process for identifying, assessing and selecting the subcontractors required.

➢ Identified restricted access to the end-client as a major risk. We agreed with the end-client that a specific individual, already on the project team, would represent them to the project. Further, we defined a number of stages and sought agreement from the end-client that these were mutual "continue or not" points requiring the approval of both parties before the project would proceed.

We identified the geographical spread (US, UK and India) of the project as a further major risk to the project, especially in view of the aggressive timeframe. The best means of mitigating the risk was to ensure that responsibilities, communications mechanisms and expectations were defined and understood from the outset.

To achieve this we:

➢ ensured all project staff received and agreed to documented descriptions of their roles, responsibilities and expected effort on the project
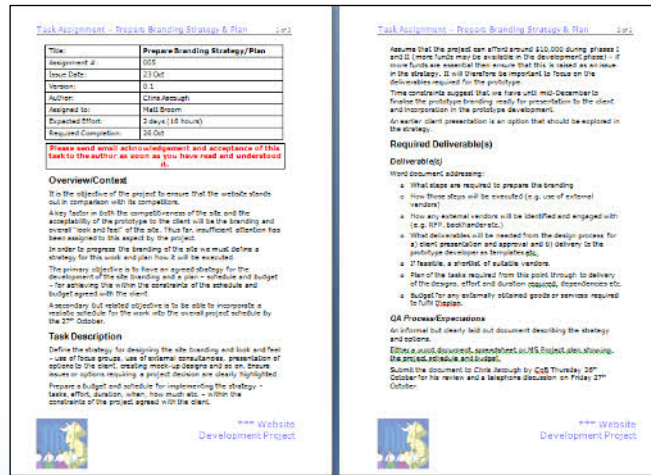
➢ defined reporting and communication processes, agreed "available" times and expected response times between different time-zones

➢ identified and implemented technology solutions to facilitate simple, inexpensive communications (e.g. IM, Skype etc.)

➢ arranged for a one-off team meeting in a single physical location in order to firmly establish lines of communication and other relationships that would form a critical factor in the success of the project.

Results

➢ The project successfully identified and signed-up suitably capable subcontractors within both timeframe and the project budget.

➢ A complex, interconnected set of activities involving research, branding, graphics, requirements, innovative solutions, design and development was initiated within timescale and budget and with all participants understanding the interdependencies.

➢ The project was closely tracked against the initial schedule and budget throughout its lifecycle.

➢ We were able to effect a smooth handover of the project to the client's project manager to complete the project, which was subsequently delivered to time and schedule.

WWW.ZEROARENA.COM