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Seven deadly sins examination of conscience

You think you're a good listener? A lot of people do. However, HighGain CEO Richard Anstruther states that attendees to the company's listening workshops are able to identify only one or two people in their lives as great listeners. See also Soft Skills: Listening for Better Leadership If you recognize your actions in one of them, it might be time to pay attention to your listening skills.Interrupt the speaker to tell your story or give advice. Do not look me in the eye. Finish the reader's thoughts or ask too many questions about details. Accelerate the speaker. Answer the phone, send messages, e-mails, or pay attention to something else. Forget what the player says. Waiting for the speaker to end up being able to "top" the speaker story "This reminds me of"... "It's nothing compared to"... Copyright © 2007 IDG Communications, Inc. Outsourcing is a source of effort, struggle and anguish for many IT managers and no wonder: More than half of outsourcing deals end prematurely, according to a study released last year by DiamondCluster International Inc., a Chicago-based consulting firm. This leaves a lot of companies away from nirvana outsourcing, but it doesn't have to be that way. We asked IT experts and veterans to talk about the wrong decisions and wrong assumptions that can cause your outsourcing project to fall out of grace. They presented themselves with seven deadly sins. 1. Weak Vice Governance: It assumes that your organization will automatically fall into a good working relationship with your outsourcing provider. Three months later, there are management problems that seem to come out of nowhere. A major retailer outsourced a project that was supposed to last six months, but 18 months later, the IOC was still waiting for results. Why? "There was no governance plan but a target for the end date", said Atul Vashistha, president and CEO of neoIT Inc., a consulting firm in San Ramon, California. A "If they had a governance plan with milestones in place, they would have realized right away that the goals were not being achieved". Virtue: Before signing with an outsourcer, nail down an organizational structure, establish methods to keep an eye on the work being done, and specify how you will manage your business. outsourcing project on a day-to-day basis. "Your system of governance should provide continuous answers to the organization about how the relationship is working, what value you are getting, how you are solving the problems that have emerged up", says Michael F. Corbett, executive director of the International Association of Outsourcing Professionals in LaGrangeville, N.Y. Build the Cost of Outsourcing Administration in your budget. The average cost to manage a contract It is 3% à 6% of the size of the contract, according to Julie Giera, an analyst in Forrester Research Inc. in Cambridge, Mass. 2. Overblown Vice expectations: you choose an outsourcing company for your ability to satisfy yours your Target, but later the company falls short in other areas. For example, one of the major European producers has been so eager to cut the costs that negotiated an outsourcing contract purely at the cost. As the project progressed, the producer complained that the outsourcer was not innovative enough. How bad was that? Less than two years after signing the contract, the producer ended the agreement - a move that brought a steep price tag into penalties and legal fees. Virtue: Don't even approach a service provider until you have primato what you expect to get for outsourcing. If you're making purchases based on the cost, you may need to give some service level. Please note that a cost-based contract may be appropriate for standard services such as infrastructure management but not for specialized skills such as application development. "You don't necessarily want the cheapest brain surgeon," says Giera. When you consider suppliers, look beyond sales pitches. "People select marketing and size-based suppliers rather than a real skill assessment," says Vashistha. It suggests that you focus on where the job will actually be done. Ask the provider of your own resource pool. Did your employees live in your industry? Do they have the appropriate technical skills? How much training does the seller provide? Talk to customers that the seller served from that location for at least 12 months. 3. Projects to blindly ban Vice: you have offshore critical areas of your business to inexperienced overseas suppliers in your field or otherwise poorly equipped to manage the task and customers are in weapons. For example, after Dell Inc. has outsourced its technical support to offshore suppliers, the Company was flooded with U.S.-based customer complaints that reported that they could not understand service providers due to their accents. Dell had to move a piece of his technical support services home to Texas. Virtue: Use common sense and send offshore projects only to countries where your industry is mature. India and the Philippines, for example, while good choices for services such as health insurance data entry, are poor choices for jobs requiring decision-making on health insurance, says Vashistha. This is because the thorough knowledge of the field is still poor in those areas. "Health insurance was not prevalent even 10 years ago in those locations," he says. Keep in mind that offshore projects cost more to manage than projects sent to home outsourcers. That can make small projects particularly expensive to send offshore. "A lot of people look at the money they'll save now but ignore will have a 20% to 25% increase in administration costs", said Rich Hoffman, President and CEO of Hyundai Information Services North America LLC Valley, California. 4. Projects Dambly Diaming Vice: you outsourced so much that your outsourcer knows almost as much about your your products and your industry as you do. According to Hoffman, the IT department of another major automotive manufacturer has recently realized that it has outsourced too aggressive and is now trying to rehire almost 150 former employees who have gone to work for the outsourcer. "When they outsourced all those people, the left half because they didn't want to work for an outsourcer, and the other half eventually was transferred from the outsourcer to other companies," he says. "So they lost all the people who knew their customers, products, automotive industry and business processes." Virtue: No outsource functions that require you to provide outsourcing suppliers with strategic information on your company and your industry. In addition, Hoffman recommends that you maintain most of your internal help desk activities in-house and discourage other business units from customer-face outsourcing activities. You will have more control over what processes are outsourced if you insist on getting involved in all outsourcing discussions. "Respond to an early analysis, and get a consensus with business leaders on what needs to remain in the fight against what needs to go out," says Hoffman. 5. Bad assumptions Vice: The five-year outsourcing contract did not take into account that business technologies and requirements would evolve within those five years. Now you can't move on with new technologies. Giera notes that due to server technology changes, for example, many companies will need less, but larger, servers down the line. If your contract is based on a per-server formula, a month, it may not be able to change that without being penalized financially, he says. Virtue: Write a contract that gives you the flexibility to replicate projects and resources without an important penalty. "Technologies change so fast and customer needs change so quickly, most parties should enter the contract waiting for a pretty high chance after the first two years to renegotiate the contract," says Robert M. Finkel, a lawyer at Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy LLP in New York. Also, make sure that the contact forces your outsourcer to keep the costs online as the market evolves. "Include benchmarking clauses every two or three years so you can watch what went on the market and make sure the outsourcer is still competitive," says Giera. 6. Service Levels Sloppy Vice: You signed a contract that gives you a minimum leverage on service levels. Now the poor expulsor service is interfering with your business, but you have nothing to support your demands for improvements. Virtue: Define the levels of service in the contract and stipulate sanctions for the missed levels of service. Having service levels in hand not only helps to that you get the quality of the service you expect, but can also help when you negotiate the contract price. "It is difficult to fix a price without knowing what levels of service are," says Finkel. But he says it's not for suppliers to want to wait until the contract is signed before accepting specific service levels. This removes your influence and makes it less likely to reach a satisfactory agreement. Penalties should increase based on how often service levels are skipped and how much the resulting disruption affects your business. "You shouldn't have penalties for a single loss, but penalties should increase exponentially more often you lose a level of service", says Giera. And the contract can establish that you have the right to terminate or resume part of the service provided by the provider if the number or severity of service-level problems reaches a certain level, says Finkel. The 7. You didn't include a transition plan in your contract. Now, as you come to an end, your efforts to switch to another outsourcer or bring the work in-house are hindered. Worse still: your outsourcing relationship ends abruptly. One of Giera's clients, a medium-sized manufacturing company, outsourced all of its payroll functions to a company that suddenly shut down. "My client couldn't pay his workers on time that Friday. There were no provisions in the contract to retrieve employee data and records, so they had to resort to a manual payroll system", he recalls. It took the manufacturer eight months to rebuild its payroll system, including the manual reconstruction of tax records, unemployment insurance and social benefits. Virtue 1: To minimize disruption to your business, make sure the contract requires the outsourcer to be involved in the endgame transition. "Otherwise, what's the incentive for the salesman to help you?" says Finkel. Your contract should stipulate that you can offer jobs to people on the outsourcer staff who have developed critical knowledge for your company. You should also be able to buy reasonably priced hardware and software that your outsourcer is using on your behalf. Also, be sure that the contract gives you the rights to use any software that the outsourcer develops for you. And make sure you give yourself enough time to make the transition. "When you end an outsourcing contract, you'll probably need more time than you think", Giera says. A "Specify in the contract that you can extend the contract with adequate notice at the prevailing conditions and prices for up to 90 days." Artunian is a freelance writer based in Newport Beach, California. 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