Therapists

How Adaptavist helped its client begin a strategic and technical overhaul of their applications estate.

CLIENT NEEDS:

✔ Help to understand different approaches application delivery in order to support and enable strategic changes in their business

✔ Recommendations as to how application lifecycle management should be adapted to support the whole business as it is reconfigured

✔ Specifically, guidance on how to create, develop and deliver applications from beginning to end in this volatile environment

ADAPTAVIST SUPPLIED:

✔ **A rigorous analysis** of the client's application lifecycle management and their future requirements

✔ **A highly detailed 150-page options report**

✔ **A template** as to how Adaptavist's Complete Application Lifecycle Management approach and recommendations could be applied across the application estate

✔ **A robust and resilient solution** with an SLA they can rely on

THE ISSUE

Our client is a global name in the pharmaceutical industry. They are undertaking a strategic consolidation that involves some restructuring, some acquisitions and some reconfiguration. As Simon Haighton-Williams, Adaptavist's CEO explains, "Their business transformation is raising some questions around how they manage IT and applications in an environment that's different from what they've known for the last 20 years." So they came to Adaptavist to get ideas on the best approach to managing their IT infrastructure as they go through this change.

In particular, the client wanted to have a conversation about application lifecycle management and how Adaptavist would recommend applying it. As a large entity facing the challenge of operating in a more agile way, they wanted some advice on how to manage the creation, development and delivery of applications from concept to launch to business-as-usual in a more efficient way.

The overarching goal was to establish a more effective approach to the application lifecycle across the whole business. However the client wanted us to start the ball rolling by focusing on one particularly broken application that was causing immediate pain. Once we'd demonstrated 'proof of concept' in this one area, we would have an approach that would serve as a template to apply elsewhere.

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>
> *Simon Haighton-Williams | Adaptavist*

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THE INITIAL PROJECT

The area the client wanted us to look at first was their website development application. Three years previously they'd built a content management platform on Adobe CQ5. The aim was to bring all of their numerous country and regional websites under greater central control, increase code reuse, and reduce costs but this simply wasn't working.

For one thing, remote offices couldn't develop what they wanted because the platform was too restrictive. For another, some offices couldn't access the technical information they needed to make the application work, or understand code well enough to reuse it.

More worrying for the client was the lack of central control – control that the application had been built to deliver. Instead, project management quality and delivery were all over the map leading to operational and platform management issues. Management oversight and control were difficult because with different methodologies in use it was hard to track projects and aggregate data. Very similar code was produced in multiple locations, and the shared namespace everything was operating in, leading to updates to one geography's site impacting that of another.

The client could clearly see that effort was being duplicated. At the same, opportunities to share knowledge and re-use components were being missed. It was also impossible to achieve good practice around platform integration testing and Process Maturity Modelling.

Finally, the client lacked visibility across the whole platform which meant they struggled to plan and predict capability, capacity and suitability. We needed to revisit the creation, development and delivery of this application and diagnose what could be done to fix it.

WHAT WE DID

Understanding the requirement

We began by speaking to virtually all of the key stakeholders, worldwide. We ran meetings and did some remote calls and workshops, but mostly we conducted a series of interviews with two people, for two hours on each occasion. We got the client talking. "It got a lot of issues out on the table so they could be seen and discussed," says Richard George, Adaptavist's project manager. This information-gathering phase took a little under three weeks.

Requirements analysis

Once we'd spent time engaged with the client, a number of structural, political, process and technical issues emerged. For example, stakeholder management was clearly a big problem. A high turnover of staff had contributed to a worrying lack of internal ownership of the existing platform. There was an obvious need for definitions and demarcations of ownership at both the business and technology levels.

The application's high level design was also flawed. This meant that communication was poor, especially in terms of knowledge management and sharing key information between teams. Resource identification was muddy, so vendor selection and management were unstructured, and could be improved with the introduction of more systematic vetting, induction procedures and training.

Projects were not being specified well because technical specifications were lacking and details couldn't be communicated to the individuals within the application lifecycle. It was evident that different technology could be used in ways that would give them better visibility and better development and release processes. We finally felt that a different application might be more appropriate for what the client was trying to achieve.

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INITIAL DELIVERY

Our key deliverable on this first project was a comprehensive report on our findings, and an options paper around the choices they had going forward to improve the application's functionality.

Among our recommendations we advised that one person, with sufficient authority and budget, should be assigned ownership of putting things right across both the business and technical streams.

We also advocated that a gated review procedure should be introduced to the current process, but also that thought should be given to adopting a more radical alternative process. We also said that, ideally, the most complex web development activity should have its own programme, managed in line with a methodology such as MSP (Managing Successful Programmes).

We also recommended that partner management be taken in hand, specifically that a vendor selection process be implemented to check that partners are properly qualified. The client should also work towards implementing a formal Partner Management Programme.

Our final recommendation was that a set of tools should be implemented to support the development process. Comments Haighton-Williams, "We recommended a toolset and processes that would allow them to deliver at a reduced cost compared to what they're achieving now."

HOW ADAPTAVIST MADE A DIFFERENCE

In Adaptavist's experience, it's short-sighted to take a snapshot view of an application and from there try patch it up. Without the context of the whole lifecycle of an application, the optimum way forward can't be identified. We gave our client a full-spectrum view on this one area of their business, undertaking an analysis that was both strategic and technical. We made a difference by deploying the rare ability to deliver both as technical experts and as strategic business thinkers. "Without the skills to delve into the detail, you can never really deliver effectively on the strategic level," notes George.

Adaptavist was also highly sensitive to the constraints that the client was working under, so we produced recommendations that encompassed a range of possibilities. We left it for the client to decide what their current appetite for change was: whether they wanted to tighten up what they were doing to make it more fit for purpose, or to scrap what wasn't working and start again. Importantly we gave them the insights they needed to make that decision.

Finally, and above all else, we supplied an approach to applications lifecycle management analysis that aligned technical understanding with insight into the wider strategic and process needs of the business. This is an approach that in time can be rolled-out successfully across the client's whole applications estate.

See how we can help you, talk to our experts today ❯

ABOUT ADAPTAVIST

Adaptavist, established in 2005, is a London-headquartered IT services company providing premium professional services, support, hosting and licenced products to a wide range of national and international clients including over half of the Fortune 500 companies. Adaptavist, an 'Atlassian Platinum and Enterprise Partner', is widely recognised as the most technically advanced Enterprise Partner in the Atlassian ecosystem.

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