

XSOL Mapping delivers its promise for PSI

Technology Consultant, Neville Brown (ex CIO of The Warehouse) was asked to undertake a review by the board of fashion importer, Product Sourcing International Ltd (PSI). The review was part of an overall strategic planning exercise with a view to replacing their existing computer system.

"I decided to trial XSOL Mapping as it was specifically designed to complete the comprehensive audit I needed to undertake," says Neville Brown.

"I have been following the progress being made by XSOL and decided XSOL Mapping offered the best opportunity to make a true and accurate assessment of exactly what PSI's technology needs are and how to meet them."

"One of the weaknesses I have found in existing computer technology is that application sets don't reflect business processes accurately. Processes that aren't covered usually end up on spreadsheets or adding to the paper war," he says.

"What XSOL is pursuing with XSOL Mapping – software that allows you define your business processes in their entirety – enables me to capture exactly what PSI's business processes look like; as opposed to mapping them against an application set and trying to spot the gaps."

Traditionally completing such an evaluation would take an analyst 4-5 weeks involving a high level of input from PSI's employees. Neville Brown completed the audit using XSOL Mapping in just four days, involving a half-day input from key staff members and resulting in a documented draft system specification that he was able to present to the Board.

This dramatic reduction in analysis effort was mainly due to XSOL's unique predefined model of business process – called Enterprise System Logic.

"Aside from the monumental time saving there were numerous benefits from using XSOL Mapping", he says. "For example, senior management, for the first time was able to take a strategic view of exactly how the business was operating.

Instead of a hierarchical impression that defines the processes in vertical channels, XSOL Mapping also creates a linear perspective that highlights each department's role in the supply chain."

Key staff members from each department were given the opportunity to confirm the processes in this visual form and understand where areas of duplication and unnecessary tasks were occurring.

This enabled PSI's management to immediately implement a first round of changes, removing the duplications, which improved operating efficiency and productivity by up to 30% in some areas.

"It also bought us a window of opportunity," says Brown. "We overlaid the existing system with the XSOL Mapping system specification. While evident that an upgrade was definitely necessary we were able to determine it was not critical and we could take our time in evaluating the options available for a new system."

The XSOL Mapping system specification documentation resulting from the audit became an invaluable part of this process. Instead of creating a typical Request for Proposal (RFP) that, in his words, is largely a function-based wish list (and generally driven by the person in the company that has the greatest technical knowledge) Neville Brown reversed the process.

"The XSOL Business Process Management map and system specification were sent to three different companies (two in the USA) requesting they evaluate their application systems against the specifications," he explains.

"One came back with an 85% match and PSI is currently considering how critical the remaining 15% of processes are to the company and the cost of customising the software to cover them.

"It is such a sensible solution. Instead of the vendor sending us the specifications and trying to match those to the way PSI does things, the responsibility was handed back to the vendor to match their system to what we wanted. Capturing the business processes up front made this possible and dramatically reduces the error potential in system selection.

"Knowing that there is no rush we will also be considering whether the system to be released by XSOL next year would in fact do the job for PSI – the evaluation should be a very straightforward process and after a first up experience with 'Mapping' should be a low-risk undertaking."

One of the real advantages Neville Brown identified with using the XSOL product was the fact it worked in a language PSI staff could immediately understand and came with a tool set that the CEO could readily utilise.

"While it was very useful to have the expertise of Graham Snelgrove from XSOL to ask the right questions and draw out the business processes at PSI in this first instance, the company is now capable of reviewing the results itself. Larger organizations should have someone capable of fulfilling the set-up function internally who could easily master the tools required," says Neville Brown.

"What we now have is a blueprint that PSI can archive providing a historical reference point for whatever technological, structural or operational changes the company may undertake," he says.

"Even more importantly, the information is owned by the company and it is no longer dependent on retaining the knowledge or expertise of any one staff member for progress to continue."