Using Distributed Resources to Address Vital Software Development Commitments at DigitalGlobe

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DigitalGlobe is a leading provider of commercial high-resolution earth observation and advanced geospatial solutions that help decision makers better understand our changing planet in order to help save lives, resources and time. Sourced from the world’s leading constellation, DigitalGlobe’s imagery solutions deliver unmatched coverage and capacity to address their customers’ most demanding mission requirements. Each day customers in defense and intelligence, public safety, civil agencies, map making and analysis, environmental monitoring, oil and gas exploration, infrastructure management, navigation technology, and providers of location-based services depend on DigitalGlobe data, information, technology and experience to gain actionable insight.
The joint DigitalGlobe and Accenture systems integration team delivered the development and testing for the satellite launch ahead of schedule, helping to deploy this significant investment on time.

**Business challenge**

DigitalGlobe faced the need to complete a significant amount of development, testing and systems engineering in order to launch a new satellite by its target date in the summer of 2014. The company had just finished a significant acquisition and was in the midst of integrating processes and technology while concurrently working to complete the IT work in advance of the satellite launch date. DigitalGlobe’s commitment to drive shareholder value and launch the next satellite as planned led executives to explore supplementing the team with outside resources to complete the work in the desired time frame. Furthermore, given plans to continue its growth through acquisition, DigitalGlobe recognized it was quickly going to have to support a significant increase in software development and testing requirements. Executives were interested in exploring how a distributed model for software development and testing could be leveraged for ongoing capacity needs.

Having a strong management consulting relationship with Accenture, DigitalGlobe executives turned to Accenture for the additional IT capacity and flexibility they needed. Accenture was asked to assist with DigitalGlobe’s development and testing in advance of its satellite launch and, in so doing, enable DigitalGlobe to test a distributed development approach for ongoing systems integration efforts.

**How Accenture helped**

Accenture provided miscellaneous IT support with database administration, Linux, network and virtualization specialists and custom Java development, SAP, ETL and Oracle skills. Resources were split between DigitalGlobe’s headquarters and Accenture’s Delivery Center in San Antonio, Texas.

The Accenture team was built from a combination of resources from its Federal and private sector organizations. This enabled it to seamlessly provide resources with the necessary security clearances and federal knowledge as well as the required technical skills.

Accenture was the first systems integrator to support DigitalGlobe, and the engagement was the first distributed delivery model DigitalGlobe employed. Consequently, significant process normalization was required to effectively utilize a distributed model and there were many cultural hurdles to overcome as internal teams became comfortable with the approach. Ultimately Accenture SMAs became the “go to” resources in specific areas that DigitalGlobe previously hadn’t considered for external testing support.

As DigitalGlobe had grown into a more complex enterprise, so too had the various organizations with stakes in the software lifecycle. These evolutions had progressed in disparate directions and speed. In some areas, the software life cycle had become difficult to navigate and the impact of this on large and/or cross-line of business programs was more visible.

Executive leadership undertook an effort to migrate from a waterfall to an agile development approach and establish consensus across the various organizations around processes, roles, deliverables and expectations with regards to the software development framework. While involved in supporting the satellite launch effort Accenture also participated in this initiative, leading discussions on how to effectively bring together project management across both agile and non-agile development and create a comprehensive status reporting capability. The development framework developed along with Accenture offered a substantial first step toward standardizing DigitalGlobe’s large-scale global development. DigitalGlobe now has a development framework to support its future growth.

**High performance delivered**

The joint DigitalGlobe and Accenture systems integration team delivered the development and testing for the satellite launch ahead of schedule, helping to deploy this significant investment on time. The effort validated that staff capacity support through a distributed model can be both effective and efficient for DigitalGlobe, enabling the IT function to meet timelines it would otherwise not be able to address and offering a strong approach for addressing DigitalGlobe’s growing need for IT resources.

As a result of this success, Accenture has expanded its ongoing systems integration support for DigitalGlobe, providing a flexible global staffing model for various software projects through an application development solution factory in San Antonio, Texas and a testing center of excellence in India. Leveraging this global organizational framework, software programming will, when necessary, continue virtually around the clock, thereby accelerating the time to complete projects. Through this approach Accenture will provide DigitalGlobe with faster and easier access, on a global basis, to software programmers who can execute a wide range of DigitalGlobe software projects and enable DigitalGlobe to complete projects at lower costs and higher efficiency.
About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with approximately 289,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world’s most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US$28.6 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2013. Its home page is www.accenture.com.