

Management Consulting Services



Sandeep Suri
CEO

CEOCFO: *Mr. Suri, your website indicates that Dfuse Technologies is the experts in the big middle. What is the approach?*

Mr. Suri: Basically, it is a concept that we have been working with for a while now. What really happens is that many companies, when they are trying to approach projects, they are looking at the requirements and the design aspects and then they jump right into the deployment and implementation aspects of it, instead of focusing on the actual deliverable. The actual deliverable, in our domain, is the software itself. If you forget that you have to traverse through the requirements and come up with a solid design and then convert that design into the software that has been tested for security, functionality and maintainability; that is the big middle. That is what many companies tend to forget, because the projects span anywhere from three months to eighteen months. In the course of those three to eighteen months the focus shifts so many times that the big picture, the big middle itself, is lost. Therefore, that is what we mean by “big middle”; that we do end to end solutions focusing on the problem at hand all the way through the process, rather than bits and pieces.

CEOCFO: *Would you give us a concrete example of what you are doing that is different and how that compares with the typical method?*

Mr. Suri: To give you an example, we use what is called agile methodology. Many times our customers do realize the gains that they are going to get from a software development project in sprints. When I call it a sprint, a sprint is a four to six to eight week time cycle which we use to decipher and dissect the requirement into smaller pieces, take those requirements and build the design aspects around it and then do development. While we are doing the development our testing team is working on formulating the test cases which map to the requirements. Once that happens you have a well oiled machine working in tandem, rather than working in silos, to achieve the end goal. The end goal is the set of deliverables that are set forth in that sprint as per the agile methodology. Thus the customer realizes the value very quickly, rather than waiting till the very end of that twelve to eighteen month cycle, in realizing what they are paying for and what they are getting. What if we miss the requirements or they did not articulate their requirements correctly? Now you have lost all of that time and have no way to go back and regain that time and be able to fix problems. That is when many projects fail, because they are now scrambling to come up with a solution that may be the right solution, rather than “the” right solution. Therefore, we apply the agile methodology concepts to the project which allows us to gain feedback from the customer very early on. It allows us to give them solutions in such a way that they are also in the mix all the time, knowing what they are going to get. That is an example that I can think of.

CEOCFO: *Do potential customers understand the difference? Is there an aha moment when they realize that your approach has such greater value?*

Mr. Suri: That is a very good question! I can answer that in two parts. The first part is that traditionally, in the software development arena there have been several approaches, one of them being the waterfall approach and there are several others. However, in the last few years agile methodology has really taken a front seat, because of the value it brings and because of the way it shapes up the project. Therefore, we actually take the best of both worlds. We mesh the waterfall with the iterative approach. What that does is, that takes the positives of waterfall, but creates an iterative, four to six week sprint cycle, such that we do not lose track of what started off in the beginning of the waterfall. The beginning of the

waterfall is the requirements analysis. However, if you are doing the requirements analysis, let us say, in January and you are not deploying till December, then much of this knowledge that is there from the requirements analysis may not get transferred into the right design, may not get transferred into the right development and everything kind of falls apart. Therefore, we take the waterfall approach, but mesh it with the iterative approach and apply the scrum methodology, which is one of the agile methodologies, to that process, so that we gain the best of all the worlds and bring the robust solution to the customer. The second part to that is that many companies feel that when it comes to delivering projects on time and within budget, especially because they fall into the waterfall methodology and the negatives that methodology wherein they spend a lot of time in the requirements analysis and design, but the end product does not mimic that. That is because along the course of time the customer changes the requirements, they are not able to retrofit them correctly into the original requirements document, and then there could be personnel changes, let us say, and knowledge transfer does not happen correctly. All of these negatives of the waterfall; we just throw that out of the window by converting that into our own hybrid methodology which allows for gaining insight into any issues or problems right there and then, rather than waiting for a year.

CEOCFO: *Is there a common thread amongst your clients?*

Mr. Suri: Not really. Dfuse does a lot of business with the federal government as a prime contractor or as a subcontractor to the large integrators. We also do a lot of work in the commercial space. From a vertical perspective, we do a lot of work in the federal government. Within the federal government we do a lot of work for the DOD, which entails the US Army, Air Force and different intelligent agencies. On the civilian side we work at the FAA, USDA, NOAA and some of these agencies. On the commercial side we have been working a lot for some of our customers in building mobile applications, Google Glass applications and performing Middle Tier Software Development, which allows for them to integrate several different systems into a one stop shop, such that the upper management gets to see one view of what is happening in their enterprise.

“You have to differentiate yourself. You have to innovate; you have to show your customers the value that you bring to the table. You need to give them a value proposition that makes sense for them and their environment. Rather than saying we do everything, we tell them, ‘We do this and we do this very well.’” - Sandeep Suri

CEOCFO: *What have you learned over time about dealing with the challenges of working with the government?*

Mr. Suri: What I find and what I have learned over the years in working with the government is that there is a lot of bureaucracy and red tape that you have to sift through to be able to explain to them what is the right solution for the problem at hand. Many times they are bogged down by the current infrastructure of legacy systems or legacy personnel who have been there for years and years and do not want to adapt to the new way of doing things very quickly. Therefore, it has been an uphill battle when it comes to bringing innovation, bringing new technologies and bringing new ways of doing things. As an example and to follow onto the previous question, we had to do a workshop at one of our government customers showing them how agile is a better way of doing software development than the ways that they are used to. Not that their ways are bad or not right; it is just that the new approach gives the insight into problems very quickly, which saves them time, saves them money and saves them resources. That is why they agreed upon it and they like it. We actually won an award for building an application using agile software development methodology at one of our Government Customers.

CEOCFO: *What is your approach on the security issue? How do you keep up with all of the changes? How do you know what is best with any given project and how do you really make it safe and secure?*

Mr. Suri: That is a very good question. Right now, the hot topic is the Sony data breach. You probably know of that. Therefore, it is becoming very apparent that you cannot take security as a last activity, like most projects do. For example, when the implementation phase is going on that is when they start to work on the security aspects around the software components, security aspects around infrastructure, security aspects around the user's access and things of that nature. Therefore, what we inculcate into our system and our methodology is a security first approach, rather than security last approach. For example, we deployed a very, very secure system at one of the intelligence community client of ours. They were very in tune with the process and we were very in tune with the process. That is because we brought the security aspects to the forefront in the very beginning of the project, which they appreciated. I think they gained from it, because if we were to bring in the security aspects, let us say, at the last twenty percent of the project phase, they would never have been able to deploy the project within budget and time. That is because the environment was so secure that they would not allow the software to be deployed in the state that it would have been otherwise. Therefore, what we did was that we included all of the security controls in our software development process, so not just the requirements and the design and

the development and the testing, it also included the security components as part of that software module that was being built in that phase. Therefore, our approach is security first, rather than security last.

CEOCFO: *Dfuse has been recognized on the Inc. 5000, so clearly business is good. How do you continue the trajectory?*

Mr. Suri: That is a very, very challenging question. Also, the environment lends itself to being very challenging, because there are several companies out there who are trying to win business. It is a very big marketplace, but yet you have to compete. You have to differentiate yourself. You have to innovate; you have to show your customers the value that you bring to the table. You need to give them a value proposition that makes sense for them and their environment. Rather than saying we do everything, we tell them, "We do this and we do this very well." To give you an example, we do not do everything under the sun as an IT services company. We do certain things and we do those things well. We have past performances to prove that and our customer testimonials to prove that. Having said that, it is a challenging environment. However, we have a pipeline of current customer projects that may get extended and/or may evolve into new projects because they like us. They want us to do the work for them. Therefore, we like to win from within, rather than necessarily going out there and trying to win new business from agencies and our customers who are new to us. That is not to say that we do not do that, but we have a healthy mix of repeat business verses new business.

CEOCFO: *It is a challenge to find tech people with both the skills and the philosophy and understanding of the concept of how you work? How do you find the right people?*

Mr. Suri: That is the other challenge. This is a puzzle and each piece brings its own challenge. Winning a project and then being able to find the right resources to build upon that; it is definitely very challenging. That is because, sometimes what we do is we find a really, really good technical resource, but their people skills are very bad or are not up to par. Therefore, you are kind of afraid of sending them to your client site, not knowing exactly how they will behave. Now, sometimes you find really good people who can communicate well, but their technology skills are not up to par. Therefore, we actually find a healthy mix between the two major skill sets that are required, which is the technology itself and the people skills. That is because, if you cannot communicate in a project effectively, then you are wasting everyone's time and if you cannot communicate the technical aspects effectively, then again you are wasting everyone's time. Therefore, what we do is we send our folks to trainings; whether it is security related and/or technology related. We send them to conferences as needed so they can learn the innovation that is going on in the industry to mitigate some of those risks. From the perspective of communication we talk to them and we actually have a stringent interview process which goes through several rounds before we really bring them on board, which then tells us whether this person is really good at what they are saying they are good at and whether they are able to articulate what they do in a manner that we understand it; not only just me as a CEO, but our technical managers and folks who will be working with that person, talk to that person. That helps the process very well.

CEOCFO: *Why is Dfuse Technologies a noteworthy company?*

Mr. Suri: As I said, there are tons of companies out there who are doing exactly what we do or right around what we do. That is because the technology stacks are essentially limited when it comes to choosing what technology you would want to choose for a software project. For example, there are a handful of software languages that are being used in the industry. Therefore, whether you choose Java, DotNet, C Sharp or PHP, it is a limited number. Therefore, how do we differentiate ourselves? We differentiate ourselves by bringing in that unique blend of methodology that allows our customers to see value very early on in the project. That allows them to save money, save resources, allows them to budget very easily. Rather than budgeting for eighteen month cycles we budget for six week cycles and grow upon that. Therefore, the methodology that we bring differentiates us, as well as the innovation that we bring. We just delivered a project using the most cutting edge technology in the Bluetooth space, called the Bluetooth Low Energy. Therefore, we bring the innovation to our customers, so they can see that we have the depth that they can leverage when they are deciding upon one technology verses the other. Lastly, it is all about people. The people that we bring to our customers who they will work with on a daily basis go through several rounds of interviews and go through a stringent process. We are an ISO 9001 certified company, so we have to follow certain processes which we can adhere to and apply to when we are finding the right resource for the project. That tells our customers that we are going through the pains so that they do not have to go through the pain. These are the unique three things that we bring to the table which differentiates ourselves from the rest.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine



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