

Case Study

Internal Ownership of OpenAir Implementation Proves Beneficial at MetricStream

MetricStream

Private Firm

Employees: 220

OpenAir Users: 100

Expenses

Invoices

Opportunities

Projects

Resources

When implementing a software solution, an internal champion to guide and nurture the deployment is essential. A lack of this leadership often results in a large investment in software that is rarely used. On the other hand, successful ownership will lead to increased user adoption and significant return on investment.

MetricStream, a governance, risk, compliance and quality management solutions company based in California, experienced both ends of this paradigm. The company provides a comprehensive suite of products to manage compliance with multiple regulations, corporate policies, and quality standards. Their product suite provides an integrated system of record for all quality, compliance and risk issues within an organization. Their client base spans many industries including FDA regulated industries, energy, financial services and high tech.

When Joe Longo, VP of Professional Services Operations, was brought on at MetricStream, the infrastructure to support the professional services activities was holding back the growth in their projects and organization. “We were really at ground zero when I first started which left me often asking the CEO for insight,” said Longo. “We had ad-hoc time tracking, and very little in terms of profitability metrics or reporting for professional services.” MetricStream’s finance team was also hurting as a result. “To properly manage our team, I needed a PSA tool to be brought into MetricStream.” ...

Owning OpenAir

Although a solution to automate these business processes was absolutely necessary, garnering corporate approval proved more difficult than expected. “Prior to my tenure at MetricStream, a similar PSA solution was brought in but never got off the ground. It was doomed to fail from the start because there was no internal ownership of the project,” said Longo. Without someone to drive and guide the process of deploying a company-wide software solution, the implementation is risky and often unsuccessful. To make matters worse, there wasn’t any budget for a PSA in the current fiscal year. So, being a software company, MetricStream entertained the idea of developing an in-house solution. The build-vs.-buy debate tipped towards the ‘buy’ decision thanks in large part to the urgency of getting a PSA off the ground. With this in mind, MetricStream signed on with OpenAir to provide a solution to their services team needs.

Originally brought in as a personal tool to manage the professional services operations of sixty PSO developers and QA engineers, OpenAir began at MetricStream with resource management, project management, and time tracking. “It was my belief that accurate management of our services team through OpenAir was the cornerstone for building a profitable deployment practice,” said Longo. “If we could capture time accurately and invoice it out correctly, then OpenAir would pay for itself.” Within three months OpenAir invoices were generated as ‘pro-forma’ invoices, authorizing MetricStream’s finance team to perform the actual billing. Thanks to the fact that OpenAir’s Invoices module is tightly integrated to the Projects, Resources and Timesheets modules, this process turned out to be surprisingly simple and error-free. Given the diverse geographic location of consultants, the prior communication problems were entirely pre-empted with OpenAir. This allowed for robust project costing analyses that had been previously absent. “I began developing executive status reports that provided our first glimpse into project costing which was a real awakening for us. Actually seeing how much projects truly cost the company rather than just estimating the costs created a deeper understanding of our own business, and a hunger for more metrics from OpenAir.” With more data in the system, MetricStream now tracks project cost, billing, receivables, and margins, and looks to incorporate revenue forecasting in the near future.

Real results

With finance and resource management teams in India and consultants around the world, precise invoicing and resource allocation was a challenge. “OpenAir has provided us with a protocol with which to advise our finance team on how to invoice clients,” said Longo. “No longer does finance have to call our consultants to ask about hours. Their time is automatically entered into the system and processed by billing rules that stipulate how and when clients should be billed.”

Before OpenAir it had been challenging to manage resources across a 12-hour time zone difference. Now, consultants can be requested and approved for work online without any ambiguity as to who is available for assignment.

Recently, MetricStream started tracking expenses in OpenAir, making the prior manual process obsolete. “MetricStream is very excited to bring OpenAir expenses online. We expect a noticeable bump-up in billings simply because we are certain that all billable expenses will actually be invoiced,” said Longo. With OpenAir, a seamless integration between expense tracking and client invoicing provides an error-free process, so there’s no additional work to add the expenses to existing charges. “It’s like finding free money.”

A new corporate culture

What began as a personal crusade to help manage a services team has transformed into a global offering. Employees have definitely caught onto the OpenAir trend at MetricStream that grew from a hunger for financial metrics. “I think it was summed up best when our Chairman noted that OpenAir is the type of collaborative tool that is necessary for a company to effectively run a business across multiple geographical locations. Now others in the organization are searching for more of these tools to further enable our company.”

This adoption of OpenAir has been part of a culture change within MetricStream. “People have certainly bought into what OpenAir can do for us. We recently added another forty engineers to OpenAir and now there is talk of adding an even larger population for time and expense tracking purposes,” said Longo. Through proper ownership of the implementation process, MetricStream has placed OpenAir not only into their IT architecture but also into their corporate culture with great success.