



MAKE SURE YOU GET THE 'A' TEAM ON YOUR SIDE

Paul Mason, CEO, PMC, believes that a retail-focused, offshore solution is the sensible option for many UK retailers but there are some important issues to overcome and understanding is the key.

PMC operates an India-based subsidiary - PMC India (PMC-I), to provide medium-sized UK retailers with an offshore service that combines retail industry specialisation with offshore cost savings. It's also designed to help them avoid the problems and inefficiencies in traditional offshore solutions.

However, if you're not a large Tier One retailer then your potential offshore provider could put you a long way down the list of priorities. The aggressive growth ambitions of most large Indian offshore companies mean they are in a race to see who can be the biggest, fastest. Retail is an attractive vertical but unless your offshore provider understands it and unless you're offering a multi-million dollar deal you have to question whether you'll get the 'A' team or the 'Z' team.

Offshore solutions for medium-sized retailers

Before you make an offshore decision it's important to be clear from the outset on your objectives and whether you will achieve them or not. How much will the offshore provider value your business? How much do you expect your offshore partner to add to your business? Do you expect them to add value or do you just want them to decompose a specification into lines of code and give it back to you?

Mason states: "If you just want your offshore provider to be a 'code factory' that's fine but you must understand what that means. You have to make sure your specification is right and enforce the right testing regime. You must make sure you have qualified coders and prepare to dedicate the intellectual resource you feel you're going to need. Do all that and you're fine – forget to do it and you will face delays and extra cost."

Alternatively, if you want to work with an offshore provider that will take on your problems and help you solve them, the approach is different.

Look for a provider with the vertical market skills to help you. A provider that understands what you're talking about. They must know and specialise in your industry and their offshore development team must understand exactly what you want and how it is finally going to work.

How does a retail-focus work?

Describing the difference with the PMC approach Mason states: "We do not go for factory-based assignments. Neither do we look for projects where everything has to deliver for the lowest possible price, and therefore decomposes to the lowest possible level. We want 'added value' relationships where customers expect PMC to contribute a considerable amount to the system or project. Our team can operate in that environment. They are self-motivated and self-sufficient, not working within a methodology and structure that reduces everything to the lowest common denominator."

The other major reason cited by Mason is PMC's onshore presence. The two parts of the organisation, both on and offshore in the UK and India, are completely transparent and integrated.

"In the UK we have talented, experienced retail people. That enables our Indian team to build up their experience and learn quickly. PMC's native, intuitive retail understanding means we add a layer of value and protection for our clients. We handle business analysis, requirements gathering and specification in the UK. We then present this within our transparent and integrated methodology, prepared for our Indian development team," Mason explains.

PMC retains testing and QA in the UK to check that delivery matches specification. PMC documents the specification before representing it to the customer to verify their requirements before sign off. That specification is then presented in a structured format the developers can understand. This 'gate keeping' role, in and out of the development process, ensures complete understanding.

Mason closes: "Retailers cannot expect to get the best from a generic solution. Retailing is a precise science and it demands precise, focused solutions – and don't let anyone tell you otherwise."

To find out more about PMC's Offshore Solutions and Services please visit www.paulmasonconsulting.co.uk or contact PMC on 01235 521900