

The End is Near

Process Improvements and Dollars Saved Does Not Always Equate to Job Security

My time was up ... and I knew the clock was ticking. I was working for a defense contractor, and their poorly thought-out actions from ten years earlier came back to roost. They were the only game in town delivering that type of product, and knew it, so they took advantage of the Navy. Well, the one star admiral they dealt with during the project became Chief of Naval Operations and that elephant had a long memory. When the contract came up for renewal, it went to another firm. This business was the largest part of our income, so we knew we were in big trouble. One of the senior managers was a personal friend of mine. He told me, on the sly, that I was going to be on the short list (so I could look for another job). What to do ... what to do? My only thought was to find a way to extend my responsibilities and prove my value to the company which would end up extending my employment with the same firm.

I knew that the room next to my area was a storeroom filled with thousands and thousands of microfiche slides stored in standard non-fireproof cabinets and drawers. Every time an engineer needed a blueprint or parts list they would go over to the inventory log, find the document number they needed, walk over to the cabinet (usually walking up and down aisles trying to locate the right one), remove the slide in question, and now go over to the copier. There were two and sometimes they were cranky but assuming they worked, they would select the page or pages, and print off hard copies that they needed. They would then go BACK to the drawer, replace the slide, and walk back across the campus to their office. On a lucky day we would be talking 15 minutes. If there were multiple slides or any issues we could be looking at 30 minutes or more.

Engineers would be going in and out of that room dozens of times a day, every day of the week. Assuming these guys were making \$40-50 an hour each visit was \$20 to 25 spent on a very labor intensive process. Multiply this over a year and you could see that tens of thousands of dollars were being wasted.

Did you notice that I said that these slides were in a NON-FIRE RESISTANT cabinet? True, the room had sprinklers, but the slides and rolled-up paper originals were literally the



ONLY copies of EVERY blueprint or parts list the company owned. The risk if lost or damaged was incalculable. Another factor to consider was the cost of physical floor space. That room could be used for other purposes or shut down to save on HVAC. The risk and facilities costs were difficult to factor (and assign a dollar amount) but critical values in what I



wanted to propose.

Potential solution

It was obvious that the solution was to get all of the slides into a digital format along with the data from the rolled up paper copies. I went online and looked for local companies that did this type of work. They would need to take fiche and paper, turn them into PDF documents, burn them onto CDs and return everything. They would need to be fast and accurate. I spoke with the network guys and we figured out that we could place to information on share drives and use existing technology to handle the document management portion of this project. I put together the figures from the vendor providing the best price quote, the document management software and the cost for the extra drive space (this was a few years ago and 20-30GB of storage was a significant total).

It was now time for the business end of this project. I created documentation explaining the process. I created spreadsheets showing the math as well. The whole effort took about a month during which everyone knew that the end was near. I finally made my presentation to my manager and he was very impressed (and I showed it to the senior executive friend as well). The project was a big hit and I thought to myself, who knows... Maybe I saved my own job because the math of what I saved was about my salary.

The end

A week later I was called into the boss' office knowing full well what was about to happen. Sure enough I was amongst the half of the company that was let go in spite of my efforts.

As an interesting side note though, the senior manager friend said that had I been working for HIM, just my showing the initiative would have been reason enough for him to keep me there. He said it didn't even take into account the over seventy thousand dollars in estimated cost savings. I even offered to run this project as a consultant seemingly to deaf ears.

As I was packing my cardboard box, and being led out of the building, all I could think of was that it seems some people still just don't get it.

Ilan Justh
*IT Asset Manager and
Software Licensing Expert*

**Greening the Bottom Lines
of the Global 1000**

REDEMTECH
Reduce | Reuse | Recycle

**Use Redemtech to green your IT operations
and reduce asset recovery and
disposition costs 40-70%.**

Microsoft
AUTHORIZED
Refurbisher

*Increase reutilization and resale value of
surplus PCs with Microsoft-authorized
refurbishment services from Redemtech.*

