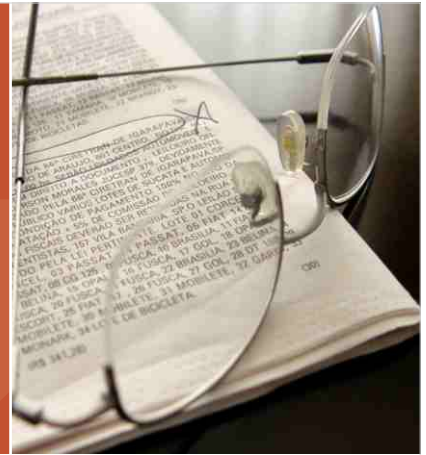


Case Study

Product Advancement - On-demand procurement automation solution



➤ THE CUSTOMER

SciQuest – a leading provider of on-demand supplier enablement and procurement automation solutions catering to research-centric organizations. Their customers include some of the world's best-known academic, pharmaceutical, biotechnology and research organizations.

➤ THEIR NEED

Staying ahead of the competition by coming out with improved product versions at closely spaced intervals and with nominal costs. They needed a flexible, technically-skilled and quality-conscious team to help them achieve this.

➤ OUR DEED

Aspire provided SciQuest with a technically competent onsite/offshore Java team to build new product features in line with their stringent quality requirements. We have enabled them to crash their development roadmap and consistently deliver between 2-3 product releases into the market every year, for the last 5 years. We have also helped them to reduce their development costs by more than 30%.

➤ TOOLS & TECHNOLOGIES USED

Application Servers: Web Sphere, Tomcat

Distributed Object Technology: J2EE

Databases: DB2 8.1

Programming Language: Java1.4

Server Languages: JSP, Servlets

IDE/Tool: Eclipse

Scripting Language: JavaScript

Web Technologies: XML, cXML

On-demand e-Procurement solutions

SciQuest helps academic and research-centric organizations manage spend and derive better ROI with their strategic e-procurement solutions. Their software is intuitive, on-demand and can be implemented in different ways for different requirements. For example, their customers can implement SciQuest's e-procurement solution as a robust shopping platform for existing e-procurement tools or fully enable all aspects of their purchasing from sourcing to settlement through SaaS deployment. which web products are created and offers skeleton code frameworks (scaffolding) from the outset. It also encompasses all the best practices followed by other technologies.

Key benefits to the customer:

Aspire helped Sciquest make its supplier enablement and procurement automation product more robust and powerful, with an array of new features and enhancement of older features.

Conversion to SaaS has also helped it attract new revenue streams and cater to the precise demands of its existing customer base

From an initial 5 member team, Aspire's current dedicated team of 22 members work in tandem and as a veritable extension of SciQuest's R&D team, delivering the dual advantage of quickness to market and offshore cost savings. Aspire has been able to keep up with SciQuest's stringent quality requirements, complex Java architecture and new technology adaptations.

Over the years, the relationship that Aspire enjoys with SciQuest has matured from being that of a mere vendor to an integrated partner for their product development and advancement efforts.



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Business requirements

SciQuest wanted to enhance the value of their software solutions through regular product releases with improved and new feature additions. They also wanted to convert their existing product architecture into a new architecture that they designed, which would make the product more robust, powerful and enterprise-class.

This necessitated an expert Java team, who could adapt and adhere to their complex architecture and stringent coding guidelines, while continuously enhancing their product.

Solution

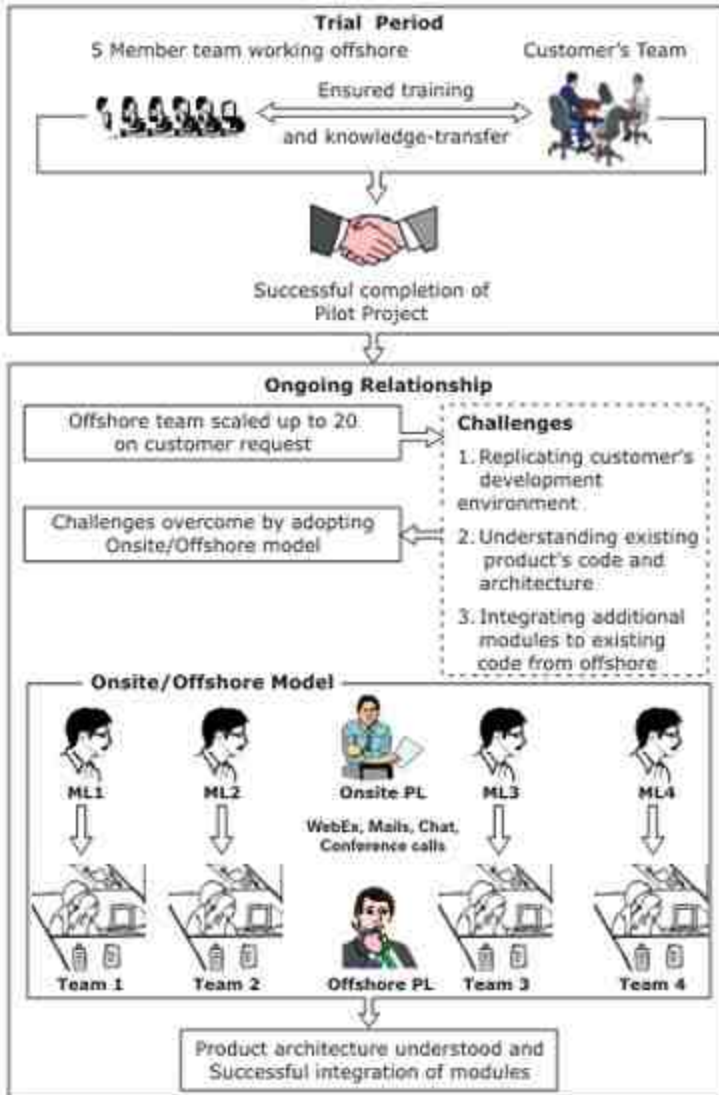
Aspire provided SciQuest with the right mix of Java talent, experience working with ISVs and product development processes in a partial Onsite-Offshore model of engagement. In the initial phase of engagement, which started on a 3 month trial mode with a 5 member offshore team, there was constant communication between the teams for training and knowledge-transfer on the product and architecture.

After the trial period, SciQuest wanted to quickly scale up the team to 20 members to take advantage of Aspire's delivery capability. By having the Aspire project lead and a few module leads travel onsite for a few months and gain better understanding on the product's code and architecture, initial challenges of communication, product knowledge and integration were overcome. Thereafter, all the various new modules developed offshore were integrated smoothly with the existing product code.

Aspire provided SciQuest with the right mix of Java talent, experience working with ISVs and product development processes in a partial Onsite-Offshore model of engagement.



Product Advancement - On-demand procurement automation solution



Aspire has exploited its potential by rigorous and intelligent application of our team's Java skills.

Over the following 5 years, Aspire and Sciquest have made the product advancement process predictable and consistent, with quick modular releases every 4-5 months. Aspire has been in perfect synchronization with SciQuest's Rapid Application Development (RAD) approach of dynamic adaptations to the product during the development process rather than between product versions.

Salient features of enterprise-class Java architecture

The e-procurement product's enterprise-class architecture uses the strength of Object Orientation in Java very effectively and Aspire has exploited its potential by rigorous and intelligent application of our team's Java skills. Some of the salient Java features and enterprise-class designs in this e-procurement product include:



Product Advancement - On-demand procurement automation solution



On-demand model (Software-as-a-Service)

This allows customers to use the product instantly without any need for setting up an infrastructure at their end and in a way which suits them without the need for high-entry costs. Added to this, it provides the user with a luxury of using the product anywhere across the globe. All they need to do is hook up to the net.

Struts-like architecture

The product uses a custom-made framework, which is equivalent to the Struts framework. Additionally, it addresses the product-specific features in a much more effective manner. This supports a great level of scalability and flexibility.

Tag Libraries

A set of custom tag libraries were developed specifically for the product. The entire GUI is rendered with the help of these tag libraries, thus ensuring a standard look and feel across it.

Caching

Instead of accessed data directly from the DB every time a page is constructed, the field and related information are cached and kept in the memory, drastically improving the performance and response times of the product. The same concept is used for caching the master data and responding to all requests.

Licensing/Roles/Permission

Access to different functionalities in the product is based on the license purchased by the customer's customers. The customer's customers can also control the available functionalities based on the end-user using it, either by defining Roles or explicit permissions. The access control layer is defined efficiently to provide granular access control.

Content Management

All the text that is displayed in the product can be altered/changed. In other words, content management is supported. This facilitates the control of all text that appears in the product.

Internationalization

The product supports internationalization. It currently supports 3 languages, but there are provisions to increase support to any number of languages without any change in code. This is also achieved through the content management feature.

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ABOUT ASPIRE SYSTEMS

Aspire Systems is an Outsourced Product Development firm committed to helping our customers build software products better and faster. We work with some of the world's most innovative Independent Software Vendors and software-enabled businesses, ranging from start-ups to established industry leaders, transforming the way software is built.

Aspire provides complete product lifecycle services, ranging from new product development and product advancement to product migration, re-engineering, sustenance and support. Our product development teams are spread between our Global Innovation Center in Chennai, India and offices in the United States.

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