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OVERVIEW

The Information Systems department at AREVA NP, Inc. (formerly Framatome ANP) was experiencing too much of a good thing. According to Bob Kibler, Vice President of Information Systems, his company had almost tripled revenues over a two and a half year period, through a combination of sales growth, acquisitions and joint ventures. While the success was welcomed, Information Systems was feeling the pressure from both internal and external customers.

Kibler recognized that in order to continue to support company and departmental strategic goals, he had to accommodate the needs of the growing organization as quickly as possible. "The larger you get," he says, "the more sophisticated your systems and processes need to be in order to remain as efficient as you were when you were a small organization."

CHALLENGES

As a result of the rapid growth of the company, the IT department:

- grew from one local office to 14 nationwide;
- acquired different systems, including two other enterprise resource planning systems;
- needed to integrate diverse organizational cultures;
- required more formality and structure.

"We had to go down two parallel paths," says Kibler. "First, we needed to merge people and systems, while keeping the system up and running. And at the same time, we needed to design a new system to bring us up to the level where we needed to be."

Lee Hite, Manager, Application Services suddenly went from managing a small local group of seven or eight, to a widespread group of seven or eight, to a widespread group of more than 25 employees.

SOLUTION

AREVA engaged Virtual IT approximately one year ago, to provide solutions in four critical areas:

1. *Development of an Enterprise Architecture:* "This was imperative in order to homogenize these different systems" Kibler explains. "We primarily wanted to benchmark ourselves to the outside world. Virtual IT comes at it from a management perspective, especially with regard to planning. They set the requirements for the enterprise architecture and the necessary personnel. With their assistance, we had access to best practices without our having to do the research – they solved a critical time problem for us."
2. *Organizational assessment:* This transitional tool, says Kibler, helped direct the company "to a more sophisticated way of operating with new people, policies, and procedures." Says Hite, Application Services Manager: "The information was organized in a way that made it easier to get my hands around it. Virtual IT thoroughly delineated our present state along with recommendations for our future state."
3. *Metrics management:* Kibler and his department asked: "What are the best practice measurements for a first class IS shop – across all the pieces of information systems? And how do we measure the effectiveness, efficiency and overall organizational value of IS?" He continues, "Virtual IT held discussions with various managers and key people in IS to make sure we made progress on these metrics. Furthermore, they gathered information across numerous

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- groups within IS.” As a result, AREVA has begun the implementation of a metrics methodology, model and process.
4. *Technology and methodology mentoring:* “This tool was necessary”, says Kibler, “for mitigating the risks associated with leveraging new and emerging technologies.” Hite gives an example: “Virtual IT validated the designs of our application architect in a Java application framework and provided him with a sounding board for new ideas.” She adds, “They ask very thorough, pertinent questions and locate value-added resources for us when we run into areas we’re new in, such as very niche technical corners.” Hite also appreciates the fact that “they explained things very well to our technicians – they didn’t just fix it and run.”

RESULTS

Kibler sums up the value of the enterprise architecture development: “As an organization, Information Systems is committed to delivering the best value at the lowest possible cost to our business partners. The framework is in place, giving us a blueprint to follow. It’s going to make life easier in the future.” He adds, “This approach will provide us with a set of technology standards, design guidelines and a common view of information. Virtual IT is leading us through this effort, which will enable us to manage a portfolio of applications and technologies, rather than individual projects and stovepipe systems.”

“The organizational assessment served as a very helpful transitional aid,” says Hite. “Virtual IT provided a fast and effective assessment of the state of the new organization, outlined several areas for improvement, and provided us with a roadmap for the adoption of industry best practices relating to the system development life-cycle.”

Regarding the metrics management initiatives, Kibler says, “Now that we have benchmarks set, we can demonstrate how we’re managing functions. We are also able to identify more opportunities to save money and affect positive performance improvements into the future.”

Hite’s comments on Virtual IT’s mentoring services: “Having their subject matter experts work with our teams has shortened time-to-market on several projects. It has also helped us to reduce design and implementation risks.”

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