

possible up until now
AMT is launching the service with the release of a model of the Leeds Holbeck Urban Village 2, the first in a series which will eventually form a library of off-the-shelf street and cityscapes of

AMT's cityscape model is expected to bring major improvements, significantly speeding up the process of taking a design from a drawing board to full planning permission status and at the same time producing a

breathe life back into this neglected industrial heartland.

of the construction community including leading architectural practices, engineers, developers and town planners across the UK. "We have been delighted by the reaction we have received from the industry to the launch of this

looking to other ways the technology can be utilised, particularly in areas of facilities management, internal building layout and health and safety issues connected to existing public buildings."

Logical solution to the professional approach

WHEN it comes to selecting the right bespoke software company for your needs, product and sector experience are obviously two of the key criteria that have to be considered.

But with some studies showing that 84 per cent of IT projects fail to achieve their goals and hit vital time and budgetary limits, is selecting the right supplier always doomed to be high risk?

Professional project manager David Weaver has good reason to believe otherwise.

Since setting up bespoke software company Logical Minds, he has achieved 0 per cent project failures, an outstanding success rate that he attributes to nothing more than effective project management.

Weaver says: "With the right project management resource, IT projects simply should not fail. Companies can probably manage smaller IT projects themselves, so long as managers have a good grasp of the rudimentary rules of project management.

"But where an IT project is very important to a business, companies should definitely source an IT company with extensive project management expertise.

"An IT company of this kind will help clients to avoid the pitfalls of poor project management such as spiralling costs, devastating time delays, ineffective IT systems and, in the worst case, complete company failure.

"Better still, by ensuring the smooth running of the project, the IT company will be able to show a clear return on investment for the client."

When it comes to effective project management, Weaver sticks to the following six rudimentary rules:

1 Specification – scope

Defining the scope of a project is the only way to reach your objectives and measure your success. From the very start you must get buy in – it is vital to involve the right people in defining the scope of the project.



Logical Minds' directors Andy Travis, left, and David Weaver enjoy the Yorkshire countryside, thanks to the wonders of modern technology.

Then breaking down the project into manageable chunks is the best way of ensuring that the project stays on track from start to completion.

2 Budget – costs

The project team must set realistic costs in relation to the specification, and the budget must match the specification to ensure effective project delivery. Once costs are set, the IT company can then come back with a fairly realistic estimate of how long the project will take.

3 Timescales – milestones

The project team must also set realistic timelines in relation to scope and cost. Again, by breaking the project into manageable chunks, project milestones can be more effectively monitored and indeed met. Reducing agreed timescales can, in

turn, increase costs and lead to reduced quality in terms of project delivery and the final product.

4 Resources – project team

Good people are key to a successful project. The project manager must be able to identify the right skilled resources that will take on the shared responsibility for a successful outcome.

Together, they will ensure that everyone in the team has a clear grasp of their responsibilities and project parameters and, most importantly, has the authority of whomever necessary to make decisions as not to affect timescales.

5 Risks

Identifying risks and managing them is critical. A "can do", proactive manner must be enthused into the project team.

The project manager must take the lead and assist the team whenever necessary in making timely decisions in mitigating or whenever possible designing out risks altogether, subject to the affects this may have on budget and timescales.

6 Project plan

All of the above must be laid out clearly in a project plan to ensure that the project stays on track.

At the end of the day, nothing will ever happen unless a logical sequence of tasks is clearly defined, spelling out what must be done, when it must be done, who must do it and how much budget must be spent. By making every part of the plan transparent and open to review, everyone involved is clear about their accountability and responsibility.

The complexity of the project plan should also reflect the complexity of the project, from minutes and action points for small projects to charts and detailed project documents for larger projects.

So why outsource to the professionals?

While following these basic rules can help companies increase the chance of project success for their own in-house projects, Weaver still underlines the importance of using an IT company with specialist project management skills for any large IT projects.

He says: "A good IT company will have years of experience in successfully managing IT projects, and a track record to prove it. They will also have project managers with strong leadership skills, people who know how to pick and motivate a good team and communicate roles effectively to ensure jobs are done right.

"More than anyone in the team, the project manager must be flexible, proactive and willing to go beyond the call of duty to ensure the project's success."

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