

Independence: a key factor in software consulting

By: Stefan Dubowski

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Investigating Canadian mid-sized organizations and their reliance on software-selection consultants for complex ERP implementations, IT Market Dynamics – the analysis arm of the IT in Canada network – caught up

with David Teeger, co-founder of Teeger Schiller Inc.

(<http://teegerschiller.com>), a management consulting company specializing in software systems, IT governance, and government grants. According to Teeger, customers expect three things from his team in systems selections: an independent stance, a solid consultation methodology, and systems knowledge – in that order.

“One of the things that our clients tell us that they like about us is that we are completely independent,” he says. “We make absolutely no money from any source other than our clients in our systems division.”

Customers might be concerned that consultants associated with specific vendors will sport blinders when it comes to helping clients choose the best system, Teeger says.

“It has to be my client’s decision in terms of who they select to go with. We will give them all of the tools that they need to make that decision, and we may say, ‘Well, I would discount this vendor and that vendor for those reasons, but any one of these three would be an acceptable choice.’ We don’t have any specific partners on purpose.”

Independence speaks to trust – and trust is a crucial aspect of the software-selection process, especially considering the reputation that the ERP systems industry has among jaded Canadian corporations.

“All one hears about are the horror stories, the runaway costs.... You need somebody to trust,” Teeger says. “When one is able to show a defined methodology the way that we do, it gives them some sense that there is some form to this madness.”

“Madness” may well describe the way software companies build and enhance their products, judging from Teeger’s words. ERPs are complex for a reason.

“Companies generally don’t develop systems from scratch,” he points out. “What they do is they’ll develop a base. They’ll go to their first client, and the client will say, ‘Well, I need the system to do X, Y and Z.’ They get X, Y, and Z, and now that’s part of the base.

“Then, they go to another client, and [the client will] say, ‘I need P, Q, and R.’ Well, then you get P, Q, and R, and that becomes part of the base.”

Mixed and matched features complicate the selection process. “The trick is to find a system whose requirements mostly match... your requirements.”

Teeger Schiller’s consultation process usually begins with an assessment of the client’s business – what the organization does, how it defines its place in the market, and how it differentiates itself from the competition. That “uniqueness” informs the organization’s business processes, and new software selections, Teeger says.

“We don’t just document what they do, we document what they do within the realm of how they will operate in the future,” he says.

Documenting that future state and thinking ahead can expedite the project.

“I am implementing a system right now where we were able to shortcut probably by two months, the ‘to be’ process, because the company, the software developer who is implementing it, is now in the process of putting [the documented information] into a ‘to be’ process tool, which shows the flow of the process mapping,” Teeger says.

Teeger will map out more insights from Teeger Schiller’s business in an upcoming article, focusing particularly on some of the surprise elements that can further complicate the software-selection process. Stay tuned.

This article can be found at http://www.itincanada.ca/index.php?page=shop.product_details&category_id=207&flypage=shop.flypage&product_id=12267&option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=

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David Teeger

Director

David Teeger C.A., C.A. (S.A.) graduated as a Chartered Accountant in South Africa, and upon arrival in Canada he obtained his Canadian C.A. designation and joined Richter & Associates, a management consulting firm, where he concentrated his practice on various business sectors including household goods, fashion, automotive parts, public associations, and retail chains. He performed many roles in his 15 years at Richter, including managing the professional services organization in North America and all business operations throughout Europe.

David's professional capabilities include computer audits, feasibility studies, system analyses and assistance in the selection, negotiation and implementation of computerized solutions.

As a founding partner of Teeger Schiller Inc., he has focused his practice on consulting to management. His team of professionals has helped businesses select and successfully install a variety of ERP business solutions and add-on systems including business intelligence solutions to give new life to existing computer systems. David's clients not only rely on him to successfully manage the implementation of their new systems, but to manage the change that occurs in their organizations as a result of the use of these new tools.



Elliot Schiller

Director

Elliot Schiller, Ph.D., C.M.C. began his career as a Chemical Engineer working for Grumman Aircraft, in Long Island, New York. He obtained his Ph.D. at the University of Pittsburgh with funding from the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, and, after being awarded a Presidential Fellowship, he went on to perform research and development activities at Brookhaven National Laboratory.

Since coming to Canada, he has primarily assisted consumer products and retail organizations in a variety of strategic management initiatives, traveling around the globe on behalf of his clients. In 1987, Elliot joined Richter & Associates, and it is here that he first met David Teeger.

As a founding partner of Teeger Schiller Inc., he has focused the SR&ED / Grant Division on obtaining grants and tax incentives for over 100 companies in the small to medium sized business sector. His team has provided services to the discrete / processing manufacturing, material development, textiles, apparel, automotive and computer sciences sectors. Annually, Teeger Schiller Inc. secures more than \$5 million in government funding to assist its clients in having their business initiatives supported by government funding.



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