

Outsourcing **INTERVIEW** by Phil Muncaster

Outside help lifts IT performance

Ramsac's Robert May explains how role-based outsourcing can help in-house IT teams

IT Week: As managing director of outsourcing and managed services company Ramsac, can you say what types of firms use such services?

Robert May: We originally envisaged ourselves as being attractive to small businesses, because those companies are not of the size to warrant properly qualified IT departments, so we can come in on a part-time basis and manage their IT. But it soon became apparent that there are many firms out there that do have IT departments but they [want cover in case] staff get sick or leave suddenly.

How does Ramsac differ from other outsourcing companies?



May: "Outsourcing can give companies the benefits of a large IT team with access to niche expertise"

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The big players such as IBM talk about outsourcing generally, taking ownership of the whole kit, but we tried to define the service by outsourcing specific roles. We try to offer all the roles you would find in a large IT department.

How do companies decide which activities to outsource?

We can do a personnel audit [which tells us] what staff they have, how good they are and what we can do to help them. Thereafter we may go in on a monthly basis and set them objectives, so IT is driven the way the business wants. [It involves] stepping in between IT and the board and we can [provide an] outsourced IT director who will sit on the client's board meetings giving IT strategy advice. It's amazing how many businesses have a business strategy but not an IT strategy.

What advantages do companies get from outsourcing in this way?

It's basically about being able to have the benefits of a large IT department without the overheads, the sick pay and the pension payments. It also gives companies the reassurance that there will be cover for any illness absences or holidays [that staff] may have, and we have trained specialists in many niche areas too. My guys are on constant training, which many businesses could not really justify. They are trained in all areas of technology, unlike in [other businesses] where they will only [be trained in] the products currently in use.

How do companies' IT staff react to your newcomers?

It depends on how good the IT department is. We could be seen as a threat, but if the IT departments are good and have nothing to hide, they are usually welcoming and very helpful. We are there to provide additional help and resources but if the [IT staff] are not very good

About Robert May

- Robert May founded outsourcing services firm Ramsac in 1990.
- He is responsible for business strategy, technology design and industry partner relations.
- Previously, he worked in various IT roles, including training, programming, software development and systems consultancy, at Orchard Business Systems, Solution 6 and other firms.

and are blagging it, they have a lot to worry about when we come in.

You also provide an IT due diligence service. How does this benefit organisations?

Financial due diligence analysis is compulsory and helps firms to establish exactly what they are buying. But IT due diligence is normally not covered - sometimes because people are trying to cut corners and don't want to spend the extra money if possible. In one company we looked at there were 350 users but only one licence, so [the purchasing company] would be liable for [additional licences or possible legal action].