

Outsourcing with ArdentA

A Business White Paper

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Reducing Total Cost of Ownership	2
Technical Expertise	2
ArdentA's Outsourcing Methodology	2
Due Diligence	3
Service Level Agreement	3
24x7 Call Centre	3
Outsourced Functions	3
Change Control	3
Round the clock monitoring of system performance	4
Regular Account Reviews	4
About the Author	4
About ArdentA	4

Introduction

The outsourcing of any part of its business is one of the most important and complex business processes a company can undertake. It is necessary for both the client and the service provider to enter into the contract with their eyes wide open.

Reducing Total Cost of Ownership

One of the top reasons that a company decides to outsource a part of its business is to control and reduce operating costs.¹ The Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) is a major factor affecting clients today. Significant reductions in TCO can be demonstrated purely on cost saving of staff salaries before potential support and maintenance reductions are considered.

Technical Expertise

Given the complexity of running a business critical enterprise operating system and the impact that problems may have on a business, it is vital that all aspects of the system are carefully managed and monitored.

Access to technical expertise also features prominently in the top ten reasons for outsourcing. Many companies simply cannot retain the level of technical staff required to maintain such a complex operating system.

A successful managed service provider must understand the client's goals and objectives, be flexible on contract terms and overall provide an ongoing commitment to quality.

ArdentA's goal in any outsourcing relationship is to ensure that it provides valuable solutions and services to the client, to understand the client's business and culture and to provide flexibility in meeting the ongoing requirements of the client's use of Information Technology.

Using ArdentA to outsource the support of business critical servers enables customers to concentrate their Information Technology resources on new developments to fulfil new business requirements to gain competitive advantage in their industry.

ArdentA has made extensive investments in technology, methodologies, and people. It has gained expertise by working with multiple clients facing similar challenges. This combination of specialisation and expertise gives ArdentA's customers a competitive advantage and helps them avoid the cost of chasing technology and training.

ArdentA's Outsourcing Methodology

Many clients find themselves viewed simply as a number in a large service provider's helpdesk system.

ArdentA believes that maintaining personal relationships with the client is paramount to achieving a successful relationship.

Regular account review meetings and service level reports are provided to the client to enable them to assess the relationship and address any issues that are outstanding.

The first step in ArdentA's methodology is to identify the processes that are to be outsourced. Traditionally, clients outsourced the non-vital parts of their infrastructure to a service provider. This was done to minimise risk to the client. However, these days, clients are discovering the benefit of outsourcing their core critical systems.

ArdentA adopts a strategy for relationship-based outsourcing rather than transaction-based outsourcing. This is important to establish for a successful service provider agreement.

The next stage in the outsourcing methodology is to assess the operational and organisational readiness to outsource. It may be that it is simply not practical to outsource certain aspects of the client's infrastructure due to operational aspects, for example if remote access to the systems could not be established for security reasons. A client may not be organisationally ready to outsource because of an existing outsource agreement or existing staff who have to work notice.

¹ [Source: The Outsourcing Institute's Annual Survey of Outsourcing End Users]

Support from management is vital to the success of any outsourcing agreement. Senior management need to be clear on their strategy and encourage the idea of outsourcing to the staff. A level of synergy must exist between the client and service provider.

Once the assessment stage is complete, ArdentA will develop a draft Statement of Service Requirement (SSOR). This will address the objective of outsourcing, the underlying strategy to get there and the final goal.

The SSOR will include the business processes to be outsourced, the relationship structure between ArdentA and the Client, the scope of the requirement, risks and expected duration of the contract.

Due Diligence

Once the SSOR is agreed and signed off, ArdentA begins due diligence on the systems to establish the nature of support requirements. This will eventually develop into a formal Service Level Agreement between the client and ArdentA. The required support functions are defined and agreed.

Service Level Agreement

The SLA defined in the due diligence timeframe forms the basis of the contract between the client and ArdentA.

ArdentA offers a SLA based service to ensure that should the client's business critical system encounter any technical problems; they are dealt with quickly and with minimum disruption to the business.

All metrics defined within the SLA are measured and monitored in accordance with the ArdentA's quality system.

24x7 Call Centre

Depending upon the business requirements, ArdentA can offer its Remote Managed Service from 9-5pm, Monday to Friday; 6-10pm, Monday to Saturday or 24x7, 365 days a year support. This enables ArdentA to provide the level of support required by the client, cost effectively.

ArdentA employs experienced analysts to respond to incoming support calls. Its aim is to ensure that its clients will never be just a number on the system. Since the ArdentA analysts have many years' experience working in support roles, they are able to quickly identify the problem, and if need be, contact the relevant manufacturer or third party support company.

This means better support and communication for the customer, which in turn will result in shorter problem resolution times

Outsourced Functions

Since the scope of the support functions is defined within the due diligence period, a multitude of functions can be outsourced. The may include but are not limited to:

- Performance Monitoring and Tuning
- New Installations
- Software Upgrades
- Patch Management
- User Management
- Printer Management
- File system Management
- Re-configurations (for example, SCSI to SAN migrations)
- Scheduled Downtime and Maintenance
- Storage Management
- Database Administration
- Network Management

A team of Industry Certified System and Database Administrators are employed by ArdentA to ensure that no matter what, the client's systems are managed and monitored.

ArdentA Managed Services do not take sick days, maternity pay or holidays. This takes the headache out of running the client's business critical systems

Change Control

Once the managed service agreement is in place, any changes made to the client's systems are recorded under change control. The client approves all changes after ArdentA's technical inspection.

Ardenta has an in-depth understanding of change control and quality management. Having gained an ISO 9001 certification in "The provisioning of IT services ...", ArdentA can ensure that all work carried out will be of the highest quality

Round the clock monitoring of system performance

Utilising best-of-breed system monitoring tools, ArdentA Remote Managed Service ensures that the client's systems are performing to their optimum at all times. Should a performance problem be detected, ArdentA will contact the designated point of contact to authorise remedy. This ensures that the client is fully aware of any issues in with their system.

Regular Account Reviews

It is vital that the client is satisfied with all aspects of the remote managed service. Regular account reviews are held at the client's convenience to ensure that all outstanding problems are reviewed.

About the Author

After achieving a BSc (Hons) in Computer Science from the University of Newcastle, Scott pursued a career as a technical IT consultant. Scott has had training from companies like Hewlett-Packard, Informix, and EMC and is an Oracle and Informix database administrator (DBA). Scott is a member of the British Computer Society and the Outsourcing Institute.

Scott has worked for a number of organisations including DHL, British Telecom, Parallel IT Consulting, MacDermid Europe, and BSO/Origin BV.

Scott planned and executed the migration to a new European data centre for DHL Worldwide Express from servers based in individual countries. This included implementing storage solutions, building a complete migration environment and designing a backup and recovery solution.

About ArdentA

Ardenta is an independent IT consultancy specialising in managed technical services, remote technical support and project management to organisations running database management systems on a range of computing platforms.

Based in Sunbury on Thames, the company's mission is to help enterprises to minimise their total cost of ownership by facilitating optimal use of their technologies.

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