Venice Consulting Group

Venice Consulting Group (VCG) is a software consulting and application development company. We have been employing a Nearshore outsourcing (Nearshoring) model since 2001, and have completed over 50 successful projects over 12 years of using Nearshore resources.

Nearshoring Defined

Nearshoring | neer-shawr-ing |
noun
1. the transfer of business or IT processes to companies in a nearby country, often sharing a border with your own country.

“The U.S.-based company is focusing on the nearshoring of its customer-service operations from India to Mexico.”

Over the years we have learned a few things about what makes a Nearshore project work and what doesn’t. Use this “10 Point Checklist for a Successful Nearshore Project” for a successful development project. Find out more about nearshore outsourcing and how you can leverage the nearshoring model here.
Managing an outsourced team has its unique challenges. Before you begin your next outsourced project, consider using Nearshore resources to reduce the risk and headaches involved with typical Offshore resources. Completing this checklist and makes you've covered your bases!

1. **Vet the Remote Project Team Members**

Make sure your remote resources are a good fit. Before you sign the SOW, have an interview with each potential project resource. You're looking for **team fit, communication ability** and **technical chops**. With nearshoring, you can do the vetting face-to-face by lining up interviews and taking a short trip to your nearshore destination for this critical step. Many clients of other firms have skipped this step and paid the price.

2. **Meet In Person: Build Teamwork and Trust**

Start building trust with a kick-off **meeting in person**. Is there a cost? Well, of course flying team members around and putting them up in hotels is expensive. But, if your project is over 1,000 hours and you plan on building a long-term relationship, then it's money well spent.

Trust is a critical component of any healthy team. You want to know that there's integrity within the team and business relationship so you can count on each other. This face time in each others' environment allows team members to see where and how the other works. This can help immensely when it comes time to build software together.

3. **Develop Multiple Project Checklists**

Create checklists for **“Project Kick-Off”, “Planning/Requirements Gathering”, “The Development Phase”, and “Deployment”**. If you are running a software services or consulting firm, or you’re running multiple projects, there needs to be a way to manage the (Project) Manager. If you have good checklists for your Project Managers to follow, it removes the guess work and allows the Engagement Manager to manage the Managers.
4 Set the Project Culture
What’s most important? **Scope Quality, Timeline, or Budget.** Decide which will drive project management decisions and use this in EVERY SINGLE management decision going forward. During status calls, there will be many times when the team needs to make a decision one way or another. “Do I need this feature built to release the app, or do I need to hit the release schedule?” If you make some of the choices up front, it will help distill the project culture you’re looking for within your team.

5 Schedule Frequent & Standardized Communication
Schedule standardized and structured communication with your team. Either everyday for 10 minutes (like stand-up calls) or longer status calls twice per week. Pick the days and times and make it standard. In advance of the calls, set a status report or agenda that helps drive the call. Use a structure of: **tasks complete, tasks in progress, risks to manage, review reports for on-time, on-budget.**

6 Establish Reports and Metrics to Measure the Project
Before you start a project, especially an Outsourced/Nearshore project, establish with your project manager what the reports and metrics are going to be to evaluate the project. You need to be able to quantitatively evaluate the project and determine whether it’s on track or not. If it’s off track, you need to know as soon as possible so the management team can manage the risks and make the necessary changes.

Determine and agree on what the metrics are and what the thresholds are for performance. The client and the project manager can set the course by agreeing on what to report on **BEFORE** the project starts. This really helps ensure success and gets all parties aligned on what’s important.
Whether it's Waterfall, Microsoft Solutions Framework or Agile, when you have a distributed team it is critical that you use a formal methodology framework for development. Any good process methodology will have already sorted out what to do when issues arise and how to communicate with different roles within the team. Use a standard process methodology for software development – it will make your life, at least for this project, much simpler and minimize exceptions to handle.

Use a fully integrated development environment, especially when you have distributed developers and other project resources. If you’re using a fully Microsoft platform– use Team Foundation Server. If you’re doing Java/JS/Open-source, use Git-GitHub-Heroku together. This will make a huge difference in communication, project management, risk management, version control and process/deployment management and remove any issues related to configuration management, version control, working over one another, losing work, etc.

Setup a shared Project Management Tool (eg. Basecamp, Trello, SharePoint, MS Project Server) and have all resources update it daily. Build transparency into the project for your clients. The more transparency the client has into the project, the more they will trust that the project is on-target.

If you are using Agile Management, make sure Burn-down Reports are evaluated after each Sprint. Team members should be able to accurately estimate a given task. Ensure expectations are established in advance, as per item #4 above.
Continually Educate the Client

Anticipation and managing expectations are the greatest tools in managing a good project. Your profession relies on this knowledge, but that doesn’t mean the requestor knows how to build software.

During a project, you know where you are within a project’s phase and you can anticipate the next few steps of the process. The important point is to then communicate that to your “client” (even if this is an internal project, every project has a client). The second tool is managing expectations. As you communicate and anticipate, you’ll want to set expectations on the outcomes. This allows the removal of any project “surprises”. Managing expectations also allows for you, the project manager, to manage any potential conflicts in a pro-active manner.

Guiding the client through the process, explaining each of the current and future steps, anticipating and managing expectations are your keys to a successful project.