Majority of UK organisations collaborate but basic shortfalls could cost them dear, survey reveals

Submitted by: Pleon

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Organisations ignoring 'holy trinity' of collaboration risk never seeing expected ROI

Despite over 90 per cent of UK companies claiming to depend upon collaborative activity of some kind to improve their product or service offering, many organisations are in danger of wasting such resources and time because they are approaching collaboration inefficiently and half-heartedly. This is according to new research commissioned by IT services provider Steria that also reveals that over two thirds of companies do not integrate their IT systems with collaborative partners. Whilst intended to maximise customer satisfaction (49 per cent of organisations claim this is their key success factor), the anticipated benefits of joining forces with other organisations in both private and public sectors are consequently compromised because of ineffective planning and processes, warns Steria.

The survey, conducted by Benchmark Research, revealed that many organisations involved in collaborative activities are found lacking in areas such as Business Process Re-Engineering (BPR), effective benchmarking and support from an integrated technology system.

A business process review, designed to simplify collaborative processes between two disparate companies given their existing systems and cultures, is an important first step to take before collaboration actually begins. Over three quarters of organisations (78 per cent) were found to conduct business process reviews in connection with collaborative activity, but a surprisingly low number, only 45 per cent, conducted this beforehand, with 48 per cent of organisations conducting BPR when collaborative activities were already underway.

John Torrie, CEO, Steria Limited, comments, "Pre-planning and assessment is a must for effective collaboration and transparent customer support thereafter. It is encouraging to see that many of those who did not conduct a full business process review the first time around would, on reflection, conduct one before embarking on their next collaborative project. At Steria, we advise all our clients to conduct a BPR before collaborating with another organisation - how else can you prepare the ground and ensure that your processes will combine with the minimum possible pain for employees or customers?."

Most organisations are not supported by an integrated IT system when collaborating with another - only 31 per cent of respondents had a supporting system in place. Of this group, the public sector leads the private sector, with 36 per cent of organisations having an integrated IT system, as opposed to only 16 per cent of the private sector. Furthermore, the majority of respondents in both sectors (two thirds) do not plan to introduce an integrated information handling system to support their collaborative activity in the future. Of the third that do, the public sector once again leads the private sector (39 per cent versus 23 per cent).

Some organisations are also falling short on benchmarking success - just 32 per cent have set and published any formal benchmarks to measure the success of their collaborative activity. However, other assessment methods, particularly gauging customer satisfaction, are more commonly used by organisations, with 59 per cent carrying out customer satisfaction surveys to track success. In addition, 66 per cent

also rely on informal feedback from all parties involved to monitor progress.

John Torrie, CEO, Steria Limited, says, "This research has revealed that in the UK, really very few men are islands - it is almost impossible to do business successfully in either sector without collaborating in some way. However, the results have revealed that few organisations are doing everything possible to maximise the success of their collaborative arrangements and the associated customer benefits, for example, by supporting with an integrated IT infrastructure and conducting a business process review. We would advise that more of those organisations not yet adopting business process reviews from the outset or using integrated IT systems or formal measurements, really consider this trinity of fundamental best practice to dramatically enhance the functionality and effectiveness of their collaborative arrangements."
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Steria in the UK delivers a full services portfolio, combining consulting, systems integration and managed services with a focus on major business areas including the public sector, finance and transport. Steria employs more than 1,500 people in the UK.

About Steria (www.steria.com)
Extensive expertise in its three core businesses of consulting, systems integration and managed services has made Steria a leading, end-to-end, IT services provider for companies and public authorities throughout Europe.
With a revenue of €1 billion and more than 8000 employees, Steria is one of the top ten European IT services companies.
Knowledge of its customers' business processes, understanding the challenges facing them and an exceptional ability to respond enables Steria to design innovative solutions, with a commitment to results and customer satisfaction. Steria is thus able to provide a portfolio of proven solutions, backed by more than 30 years' experience in managing large-scale projects.
Steria's employees, who hold 30% of the Group's capital, have built a performance culture based on strong values – simplicity, creativity, independence, respect and openness – enabling Steria to help its customers make progress.

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