



On Budget and On Time:

Blue Ocean Completes A Global Data Link for IMS Health

With apologies to the character Julian Marsh in the Broadway musical *42nd Street*, the “most beautiful words in the English language” are not “musical comedy,” but “on budget, on time.” At least to a project manager!

And that is exactly how Dan Angione, Vice President, Finance, Shared Business Services, for IMS Health, described his company’s recent rollout of SAP into their Japan and Asia Pacific markets.

IMS Health, the world’s leading provider of market intelligence to the pharmaceutical and healthcare industries, offering a variety of solutions to help clients understand the marketplace, improve marketing effectiveness and optimize sales productivity.

The company, founded in 1954, has revenues of \$2.2 billion a year, with over 7,400 employees in more than 100 countries worldwide. Virtually every major pharmaceutical and biotechnology company is a client of IMS along with professional services firms, the financial community, government and regulatory agencies, ad agencies, researchers and educators.

IMS processes billions of healthcare related transactions each year, covering every major world market. The company receives data from more than 139,000 data suppliers covering 730,000 individual dispensing sites, worldwide. Data sources include drug manufacturers, wholesales, retail pharmacies, hospitals, long-term care facilities and healthcare professionals.

These databases provide a view into: physician prescribing patterns and brand preferences; healthcare classes of trade, including hospitals, pharmacies, physicians’ offices, nursing homes and alternate care sites; benchmarks and measurements within therapeutic categories; prescription drugs and third-party reimbursement

profiles; profiles and trends of diagnoses, best practices, and treatment patterns; promotional campaign mix and effectiveness in the professional and consumer areas, modeling, measuring and

benchmarking techniques for the ambulatory treatment area; global healthcare issues, and sales force effectiveness solutions to optimize sales force productivity and territory management.

“We first started working with SAP in 1996 through our German subsidiary” Angione said, and in 1999 and 2000 we consolidated our major European countries onto the SAP and shared services platforms.”

“It was a positive working relationship,” Angione said. “Before either IMS Health or Blue Ocean committed to the project, we went through an extensive interview process to ensure internal compatibility between our own people and Blue Ocean’s consultants.” “One of the benefits of working with Blue Ocean is flexibility.”

"SAP proved its worth," he said, "and we continued to work with Eleanor Wu and John O'Neill while at IMG on our projects through 2003 and consolidated 15 South American and Central American countries."

"Working with Eleanor and John was the beginning of a great long-standing relationship," Angione noted, "And the one-on-one service and commitment they provided ensured our continuing to work with them after they started Blue Ocean Systems."

In 2005, as IMS Health acquired companies to consult on IMS products, Blue Ocean participated in this global roll-out of SAP project systems.

"We had had great experience working with John and Eleanor," Angione said. With Eleanor now President, and John Chief Operating Officer of Blue Ocean Systems, Angione knew IMS Health would receive the same level of quality and service from Blue Ocean. IMS called on Blue Ocean to extend the global platform to 17 Asia Pacific countries with IMS operations.

"It was a positive working relationship," Angione said. "Before either IMS Health or Blue Ocean committed to the project, we went through an extensive interview process to ensure internal compatibility between our own people and Blue Ocean's consultants."

"Where other companies tried to tell us what we needed, rather than what we wanted, Blue Ocean and its consultants tailored everything to our needs rather than what they wanted to sell us," he added. "Every aspect of the project was customized to our specific requirements. They're top guns in experience and they listen when the customer speaks", Angione noted.

"We started working on this project with Blue Ocean in January of this year[2008]," Angione said, "and the last of these countries went live in October."

"This project completed our global rollout," Angione said, "and brought all the countries in which we operate on to one global system. It dramatically improved our information flow."

Angione noted that one of the benefits of working with Blue Ocean is flexibility.

"Working with Blue Ocean, we are able to choose the consultant we want to work with, rather than who they assign to us," Angione remarked. "Those are complex countries, with myriad reporting processes, and we needed the individual expertise in the countries in which we work. Blue Ocean already had the consultants who worked in those countries and was able to provide that expertise."

Blue Ocean also was able to provide "an excellent project manager, Ash Bhatnager" Angione said. "He was able to coordinate the entire project for us, and worked well with our internal team."

"And John (O'Neill) worked closely with us from the start," Angione added. "John and I went in and worked through all the details, holding weekly, and sometimes more frequent meetings with the consultants and staff in each of the countries."

Angione noted that due to the 12 hour time difference, that sometimes made the meetings and the installation a "bit more tedious."

"The last few remaining consultants are rolling off the project at the end of this month (November)," Angione said. "While there were some learning curve issues, of course," Angione observed, "we accomplished significant change for the better in a short period."

"Every aspect of the project was customized to our specific requirements" Angione noted. "With separate systems," he added, "there is too much extraneous communication to resolve problems. SAP eliminated a lot, if not all, of that."

"And the project came in on time," Angione added. "That's the first indicator of quality service."

"The major benefit to IMS Health, Angione said, is the ability to now have "Japan and the United States on the same system. SAP elimi-

nates a lot of email and teleconferencing traffic. We can now view data directly within different geographies, instead of constantly having to generate emails and paperwork between the countries, staff and systems." "With separate systems," he added, "there is too much extraneous communication to resolve problems. SAP eliminated a lot, if not all, of that."

"Of course, it still is a 'work in progress'," Angione said. "But Blue Ocean was able to provide experience and support in data management, and constructive comments in how we can utilize the system to maximum benefit."

"The entire project came in on budget, on time, and as planned," Angione said. ●



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