Case Study

Client: Large underground Utility Contractor based in Northern California

Client Size
(Annual Revenue)

- ○ $10M to $50M
- ○ $50M to $2000M
- ◉ $200M to $500M
- ○ $500M to $1B
- ○ Over $1B

Problem

The company's system was based on an older version of a popular construction software program that was not yet ready for Year 2000. One of the company's sister companies had made the upgrade to this newer Y2K version and had a horrible experience, including a crashed disk drive and lost data. They were reluctant to go through the same experience and asked Burger Consulting Group to assist them in evaluating alternative products in the market.

Unique Challenges

Operations was reluctant to give up several Job Cost and Subcontract reports designed and programmed especially for them. It was also necessary for operations and accounting to agree on certain key aspects of the new system, like whether or not they needed a Purchasing application. The team assembled to assist with the software selection was somewhat convinced they needed a tailorable software product rather than one which was more structured.

A sister company located in the same area and doing somewhat similar work was also experiencing system problems and was growing increasingly frustrated with the unstable nature of their software. They viewed the same systems that this company was considering but, while they liked the system that was chosen, may not have been able to afford or operate it on their own.

Approach

After getting demonstrations of a structured program and a more tailorable program, the company quickly realized that a tailorable program was far more maintenance than they wanted. The structured program was quite functional and provided them with a sound and efficient platform on which to build their information system.

The company also elected to purchase a larger server with additional licenses and become a service bureau for the smaller neighboring company. This made the licensing of the system for the smaller company more economical and actually saved the larger company some money as well.

Resolution

The company selected that product and is in the process of implementing it as of this writing. It is one of the products being considered as a standard by corporate headquarters for all business units.

Lessons Learned:

- Sometimes what you think you want isn't really what you need
- Negotiate hard and be willing to meet somewhere in the middle
- Software license agreements are not cast in stone
- The service bureau approach remains viable
- Include a cancellation policy in the contract for software that has not been on the market for a considerable period and thoroughly tested