
COLLABORATING
with STRATEGIC
PARTNERS



Cutting costs while improving efficiencies





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success.”

Author Unknown

In tough economic times, organizations are looking for any way to trim costs without compromising efficiency or quality. As they strive to streamline workflow, align employees with tasks that utilize their core competencies, and outsource those processes that don't directly contribute to revenue generation, **companies may discover that running lean actually makes sense no matter the economic climate.**

Today's companies have so many more options for boosting efficiency. Web 2.0 and cloud computing have allowed the development of thousands of applications for all sizes and budgets providing solutions for everything from web-conferencing to invoicing and project management. Job sharing and telecommuting are common place, allowing companies to tap the most talented people regardless of their location or preferred work style. Communication with customers is more interactive and finding strategic partners is so much easier thanks to social networking and online communities.

One of the most effective yet often underutilized strategies for prospering even in a down economy is contracting back-office administrative processes such as data entry to experts like Priority Data in Omaha, Nebraska, who can complete the tasks quickly and accurately, and often at a much lower cost than the salary of a full or part-time employee. By collaborating with trusted outside vendors who can efficiently manage mundane, repetitive tasks like information processing, organizations and their employees are then able to focus on the specialized areas for which they are more qualified. This simple shift can profoundly impact the quality of all core areas of service, production and growth, boosting the bottom line.



WHY COLLABORATE?

Collaborating with U.S. vendors for data processing is a great example of how organizations can leverage a vendor's expertise and staff to handle tasks that the internal employees were having difficulty juggling. Let's take a look at three composite examples of typical Priority Data clients: organizations faced with internal challenges that decided to collaborate with a strategic partner to manage tasks like data entry.

The Law Firm

Beth, a busy law clerk, was tasked with filing paperwork for the firm's cases with various entities, including e-filing them with state and county government websites. This meant she was scanning and converting documents to PDFs as well as manually entering data into e-forms. The process was time-consuming and ineffective, which meant Beth wasn't able to file with all of the end users in a timely manner.

Beth's boss realized she needed help, but he lacked space and additional computer stations for extra staff, so Beth kept doing the best she could, and the law firm kept falling short of its goals. In the meantime, **Beth became even more discouraged because no matter what, she couldn't ever get ahead of the curve.**

The Insurance Company

The claims department of a mid-sized independent insurance company was under pressure to process claims quickly. Sam, along with the eight others in the department, was trained to review and evaluate claims to determine the next steps. He collected information from the agent, the customer, the adjuster, the police report, the witness statements and any other supporting information in order to make a decision about whether to approve or deny each claim. However, before he could make the decision to send the claim to the next stage, he had to enter all of the information he'd gathered into the computer so all of the supporting records could accompany his decision.

Unfortunately for Sam, he wasn't meeting processing expectations because he was bogged down in the data entry. He was scanning documents, filling out forms and filing reports. **Without the extra time and hassle of keying in data, he could focus all of his time on the claims' analysis and evaluation for which he'd been trained, and the part of his job he found challenging and rewarding.**



WHY COLLABORATE?

County Government

Pressure to cut costs at all levels of government has never been higher, with personnel and operations increasingly under the microscope. How can any government agency manage all of the paperwork and data entry that is required by law if resources and personnel are being eliminated?

Mike, the supervisor of the county court records division, knew it was only a matter of time before his staff was under scrutiny. One of their tasks was to enter the information from every traffic ticket that was written into the county court's computer system before each offender's court date. Mike's challenge had always been the inconsistent work flow. Sometimes his small staff would get the information entered quickly and then he had to find additional projects to keep them busy. However, after big enforcement periods, the staff was overwhelmed finding it almost impossible to keep up with the flow of tickets. At those times, Mike had to pull people from other areas, including customer service reps, computer programmers and others to help with the data entry.

Mike knew he couldn't change the work flow patterns, but he also knew his employees were not being utilized efficiently.



DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE

Outsourcing describes the process of hiring outside experts to handle tasks that may have previously been managed within the company.

It is often confused with the words off-shoring or near-shoring, which describe situations when work is sent to companies in foreign countries to handle. However, it's important to remember that outsourcing is also hiring a firm across the street to take over tasks the company can't or doesn't want to manage.

In order to better understand the value of collaborating with outside strategic partners like Priority Data, it's important to clarify a few misconceptions.



TOP OUTSOURCING MYTHS

1. American jobs will be lost to cheap labor overseas.

Finding great outsourcing solutions doesn't have to mean crossing the ocean. Working with U.S. companies not only keeps our economy strong, it also can mean a better fit when it comes to understanding business culture and economic pressures.

2. We'll lose control of our data management processes.

Well-respected strategic partners work hard to implement each client's preferred method for capturing and processing its data. Extensive reporting demonstrates that each client's unique requirements have been followed.

3. An outside vendor can't ensure our data's security.

An expert outsourcing vendor probably has more layers of security surrounding your data than you do. Priority Data employees are carefully screened through extensive background checks, sensitive areas where data entry is handled are accessible only through secure entry protocol, cameras monitor all activity in the data entry areas and the layers of security involving the disposal or destruction of data are extensive.

4. Input accuracy will suffer because outsiders won't care.

Unlike most organizations who assign in-house personnel to handle data processing, external vendors and their employees focus on nothing else but processing data. No answering phones, no meetings, no casual workplace banter. Employees, like those at Priority Data, are paid for meeting quality production quotas, and so they're completely focused on accurate input for every project. In addition, data can be double-keyed, which means two different people enter the same data and any disparities are immediately flagged and corrected. Harried in-house employees with good intentions for accuracy may barely have time to key the data once.

5. It's just easier to find someone in-house to do it.

How you choose to allocate your personnel has a direct impact on your organization's operational efficiency and therefore on the bottom line. Outsourcing allows companies to hand over tasks like data entry that require focus and accuracy but no additional specialized training, so that salaried employees can pursue projects more directly related to growth, customer service, operations or revenue generation.



BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Many profit-driven and not-for-profit organizations have reaped the benefits of outsourcing work like payroll processing, accounting, data/ information processing and IT. With careful research and an eye on achieving business goals, finding an outside firm to manage tasks like data entry can provide numerous advantages.

- **Outsourcing can reduce capital expenses** or allow resources to be allocated in more productive ways. Instead of buying additional computers or spending more on personnel to handle data entry, companies can turn fixed costs into variable costs depending on the fluctuation of data entry workloads.
- **Outsourcing maximizes efficiency** by sending out work that can be done by strategic partners like Priority Data whose core competency is doing that work well, leaving company personnel to handle projects unique to their specialized knowledge. Companies who try to do it all struggle to excel in every area. Narrowing focus improves productivity and boosts quality and performance.
- **Outsourcing can control labor costs** by eliminating some positions or moving employees charged with mundane tasks like data entry into positions where they can contribute more substantially to achieving business goals.
- **Outsourcing generates results more quickly** because vendors have the resources and experience to make them more agile with regard to starting new projects. They don't have to train personnel, buy equipment or establish processes; they're already equipped to start working.
- **Outsourcing puts everyone on equal footing**, especially when small and mid-sized business don't have the capital to invest in the resources it might take to do the tasks themselves. By outsourcing what can be done effectively by outside firms, everyone can focus all of their attention on the most relevant and profitable activities of the business.
- **Outsourcing actually reduces risk** because outside vendors work consistently with the compliance and regulatory restrictions that affect the project and your industry. Therefore, their expertise in avoiding risk is often more comprehensive than that of an employee who only deals with that type of project occasionally.



COLLABORATION GETS RESULTS

Let's revisit our earlier examples to see how collaborating with a strategic partner like Priority Data became the solution to their frustrations.

The Law Firm

Remember Beth, so busy scanning files and entering data and still unable to deliver the information to all of the intended recipients? Her boss would have loved to have hired some help, but he was out of room and lacked the necessary additional technology.

Thanks to a recommendation from another attorney across town, Beth's boss did some research and found Priority Data, who could scan, upload and deliver Beth's mountain of case files in half the time. Priority Data had actually been providing a similar service for other professional service firms including realtors, accountants, consultants and other attorneys, so they already had established processes and well-trained employees in place, ready to go.

At first, Beth was relieved to be free of the never-ending workload, but then she panicked, thinking she would surely be laid off now that her data entry tasks were being handled outside the company. However, Beth's boss realized that she had worked hard for the company and knew the expectations not only of the firm's attorneys, but also of the end-users of the documentation she'd been scanning. So, Beth became the project manager of the Priority Data team assigned to her account, keeping communication channels open and monitoring progress. She was also put in charge of several employees in the law firm and began her move up the career ladder.

The Insurance Company

Sam's company realized that in order to stay competitive with larger companies with bigger budgets, something had to change. Sam began investigating outsourcing options in the insurance industry looking for success stories. Sam found companies of all sizes operating with quicker processing times while delivering more memorable customer service and agent support, all because they shifted the data entry to an outside firm like Priority Data. Without the drudgery of entering the same type of information into various computer forms and attaching documents that had to be scanned, claims agents could spend more time and energy evaluating the information, noticing discrepancies and determining next steps, and still be confident in the accuracy of the information being managed by Priority Data.



COLLABORATION GETS RESULTS

County Government

When he began thinking about contracting with an outside vendor, Mike’s biggest concern was the potential compromise of confidentiality and the security of the data if it went outside of the county building. However, the ability for an outside vendor to handle the variable work flow demands was attractive, and by sending the data entry work to a strategic partner like Priority Data, he could eliminate several positions, drastically cutting his personnel budget. After much research and conversations with a few local vendors, he toured Priority Data’s facilities, saw first hand all of the security measures that were in place, and made the decision to outsource the data entry. Mike has since been able to improve operations even within a tight budget and his department has become the model of efficient county government.



THE BOTTOM LINE

The decision to outsource any part of the business process really is about the bottom line – the point where operational efficiency meets profit generation. Are you spending the right amount of time on the right activities? Are you compromising the talents and skills of your employees by splitting their focus between menial tasks like data entry and creative, productive work that contributes to the company’s growth and success? Have you allocated what may be limited resources to ensure enough support for critical activities that only your organization can do?

Many American companies, like Priority Data in Omaha, Nebraska, are ready and highly qualified to relieve you of the burden of administrative tasks so your team can focus on what really matters. As Thomas Edison said, “If I could solve all the problems myself, I would.” If you’re ready for help solving your business process challenges, you’re ready to take a hard look at outsourcing.

“Teamwork is so important that it is virtually impossible for you to reach the heights of your capabilities or make the money that you want without becoming very good at it.”

Brian Tracy



ABOUT PRIORITY DATA

Since 1979, Priority Data has maintained an unyielding commitment to providing seamless information management. Our mission is to become a complete data-solutions partner for our clients -- a single source for software, information processing, data entry, database management, mailing services and integrated business process solutions. Working one-on-one to deliver customized solutions for each customer, Priority Data is equipped to fulfill virtually any outsourcing need, from small projects to complete back-office operations. Priority Data provides all services from the secure Omaha, Nebraska company headquarters. With our pay-per-task approach, we provide quality services at an affordable price.

To learn more about Priority Data's business process outsourcing options, please contact John Dunn, Director of Business Development, at 877.273.7774 x506 or jdunn@prioritydata.com.

For more information, visit us online at www.prioritydata.com.

