IT staff augmentation: balance your workforce remotely

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By Jason Bramsden, MD of DVT UK

Keeping the balance between your software development and business teams can be a daunting task, especially with the effects of the Covid pandemic still upon us.

Modern software development teams typically follow one of the various Agile models, which means staffing requirements can shift up *or* down at a moment's notice. This brings with it additional challenges, such as dealing with onboarding, briefing new staff, delays in getting new staff up to speed on current projects, and, conversely, having to deal with reducing the team size when the project demand declines.

This is where IT staff augmentation comes into play. One of the major workplace changes brought on by the pandemic is remote working; even companies that have traditionally eschewed remote working find themselves with a large mobile workforce, regardless of the Covid restrictions in their area.

An interesting sub-plot of this growing mobile workforce is that people can work from anywhere, which means UK and Europe-based companies are no longer limited to hiring staff from their immediate geographies. In fact, many companies are looking beyond their country's borders for potential scarce skill hires. This opens up interesting opportunities for companies that need to rapidly shift their staff numbers up or down, especially when they need very specific skillsets for particular roles on a team.

For example, instead of following the same cumbersome processes of onboarding new staff, remote or otherwise, companies can partner with DVT as a supplier of specialist software development skills, which not only fast-tracks new hires and fills very specific skill requirements, but also works the other way in allowing companies to decommission unneeded skills as and when required without penalty.

This type of IT staff augmentation *service*
is different to outsourcing in that augmented staff become active members of the hiring company's team, rather than working for a separate entity. Aside from the obvious advantages of streamlining the augmented staff member's role and activities within the hiring company's structure, it also means:

- The new staff member has instant access to DVT's global consulting resources, making them a 'super employee' of sorts. If a problem needs solving, other DVT resources can be called on to assist quickly without having to outsource or find new hires;
- The new staff member will typically be based at or near one of DVT's operational centres or headquarters in South Africa, which is on a similar time zone to the UK and Europe, and (when global travel resumes), is an overnight flight away from onsite visits. This makes it much more practical than working with augmented staff in other regions, like India, the US, Asia and Australia;
- The cost is typically very favourable, given the strong exchange rate advantage between the UK/Europe and South Africa;
- With English being the main spoken and written language in South Africa there are no language penalties or barriers. Culturally, South Africans and their English and European counterparts share similar interests, from sports to outdoor activities and vacation destinations, so cultural fit is often seamless;
- In the UK market specifically, the IR35 rule effectively means all contractors have to be hired on the same terms as permanent employees, driving up the cost and complexity of hiring local skills. IT augmentation gives companies a way to get back some of the flexibility they've lost from the contract market.

With severe IT skills shortages in the UK, and also in more established markets like the US, and with pressure on skills from traditional skill pools like India being further constrained by the pandemic, South Africa is fast becoming an attractive source of in-demand IT skills for UK and European companies. Working with DVT can solve multiple staffing challenges, with additional benefits that deliver greater value, responsiveness to business demands and shorter time to market on digital initiatives.

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DVT's range of services include custom software development, UX/UI design, DevOps, Cloud Application Development, BI and data analytics, Intelligent Automation including RPA, AI, Machine Learning (ML), data science, Backbase Engagement Banking Platform,

solution delivery management, business analysis, Agile consulting and training.

DVT, founded in 1999, has grown to over 500 staff helping clients globally with making an impact in their digital technology transformation. With offices in South Africa, the United Kingdom (London) and the Netherlands (Amsterdam) we build long-term partnerships with our clients.

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