

étude

Etude Consulting - The Power of the Team

'Working in partnership with businesses to help them achieve maximum benefit from their investment in information systems. We do this by being an acknowledged centre of excellence for the intelligent application of techniques and technologies'

Etude Consulting offers a range of business and IT consulting services, with a special emphasis on component based development and e-commerce. Our senior consultants can provide project leadership and skills mentoring to your team. Or we can supply an "A-Team" to resolve your business's IT problems.

Etude is founded on a commitment to the following values:

- **Integrity** - straight-talking. Value for money advice
- **Quality** - engineering-based principles that reduce project cost and risk
- **Independence** - not being "tied" to any one vendor or product, we can give you unbiased assessments you can rely on
- **Focus on Value** - our measure of success is the value added to your business
- **Teamwork** - clarify the project process to harness the power of the team
- **Innovation** - constantly exploring new techniques and ways of working

We operate by:

- Supplying high quality consulting and project resources
- Building a reputation for achieving better business solutions
- Focussing persistently on business value and increased efficiency
- Designing system solutions that are integrated into the business
- Capturing the Big Picture, taking a holistic view of IT investment to do the right project and avoid duplication of effort
- Reusing and circulating good ideas, best practice and infrastructure investment
- Maintaining professionalism through improvement of depth and breadth of skills
- Being an agile, continuously learning organisation
- Sharing knowledge and skills - helping our clients to improve their skill set and succeed
- Managing ourselves by consensus and shared values

Our Approach:

- Establish and maintain the vision
- Obtain key stakeholder support
- Work hard to gain consensus up front and expose potential pitfalls
- Track the key technology trends that are relevant to this strategic initiative
- Where possible identify a benchmark organisation or programme
- Engage actively with risk in the project plan
- Where possible establish a flexible component based architecture
- Communicate unambiguously using visual modelling in UML
- Understand the numerous ways in which the current system or process is providing benefits
- Focus on delivery
- Develop iteratively and incrementally
- Adopt effective and change management procedures
- Obtain user support
- Establish quality criteria and test throughout the project

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case study

J Sainsbury Petrol: Supply chain management for petrol retailing

Background

JS Petrol needed to improve and automate its petrol retailing operation, to become more competitive and reduce operating costs.

There was no automated collection of remote data and the head office at Blackfriars relied heavily on manual information sent from each petrol station via the branch computer on email or by FAX.

After detailed business analysis and cost benefit analysis of the existing systems and the petrol business, it was identified that improvements to the fuel ordering and petrol distribution systems would produce annual savings of about £5M.

Integral to the proposed upgraded IT systems would be the ability to automatically collect data from each of the 200 petrol stations throughout the UK and Northern Ireland.

The Solution

A new IT infrastructure and a set of IT systems was introduced, based on Unix servers. A key enhancement was the ability to poll petrol station POS equipment to collect daily data on tank stock levels and petrol sales. This data was stored centrally in a database with a GUI interfaces to control data collection and data feeds to other areas of the business.

The fuel ordering business process was changed and centralised fuel ordering was introduced, the objective being to reduce and control petrol stock levels individually at each petrol station. Previously, local ordering had resulted in over stocked tanks at most petrol stations, which equated to a huge volume of unused fuel across the whole petrol station network and a major waste of capital expenditure.

The distribution process was visually modelled on Sun workstations using an expert system written in Prolog, to plan tanker loading and deliveries. Daily polled data from the petrol stations was used to plan and optimise tanker routing. This resulted in reduced distribution costs and a more dynamic system responding to demand. It also ensured that tank stock levels were optimised at each petrol station.

Controlling the distribution of petrol allowed more astute buying and negotiation of fuel supply contracts from the oil companies. Significant reduction in costs have been achieved when buying on the spot market when prices are good or placing shorter term contracts, rather than agreeing fixed price long term supply contracts in advance. This ability to purchase petrol dependant on market conditions has only been possible through the ability to analyse the resulting impact on distribution throughout the petrol station network.

Key project and consulting activities were:

- Performed an audit and business process analysis of the petrol business and its existing IT systems
- Undertook cost benefit analysis for the various areas of the business to enable justification to proceed with the project
- Defined and prioritised candidate systems for re-engineering based on key business processes and systems
- Introduced a strategy to accommodate future POS upgrade from the existing Edacom POS system, including the use of outdoor payment terminals at pumps
- Produced a detailed analysis of the existing and required systems
- Provide detailed designs for both hardware and software systems for the polling and hosting systems, data feeds and MIS reporting requirements
- Installed and commissioned a central polling computer systems to enable timely collection of petrol station data
- Provided data feeds from the polling and hosting system to internal MIS and reporting systems and to the fuel ordering and distribution system
- Undertook various trials and rollout phases in order to complete the project for all the petrol stations in the network.

The Outcome

- A new IT infrastructure to collect petrol station data was implemented
- Centralised fuel ordering and monitoring was achieved
- Significant reduction in fuel stocks and resulting reduction in capacity outlay
- A new automated distribution network to schedule tanker loading and distribution was implemented
- Annual savings of £5m on £100m turnover business

what the client had to say about us

"The Etude Consultants supplied have been of a high professional standard and have contributed to the success of the projects. I have been very pleased with their performance, attitude and quality of their work.

I would have no hesitation in recommending Etude for managing projects. They give a professional service and have demonstrated they can supply good quality personnel."

Darryl Francis
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER,
INFORMATION SYSTEMS DIVISION