

IFF

Proprietary Software: Time to Buy the Source Code?

IFF Goes Through the Process of Purchasing Software Source Code to Gain Creative Freedom

IFF, a leading creator and manufacturer of flavors and fragrances, has many software systems to meet their unique business needs. IFF had been working with a vendor to develop a new creative system, but during the project, they decided to purchase the rights to the software source code so they could better maintain the software. Since they had no .NET talent in-house, IFF called on Bright Network for an unbiased assessment of the source code to validate the code before it was purchased.

Solution-At-A-Glance

Company: IFF, International Flavors & Fragrances Inc.

Industry: Flavors & Fragrances

Problem: Wanted to purchase .NET source code for their existing software system, but needed a .NET expert to help them determine the value for their money.

Solution: Assess the quality of the source code and assure that, upon purchase, that it is the same version of the software they currently operate.

Products and Technologies:

- MS .NET, C#
- MS SQL Database

Timeframe: 2 weeks

Quality assurance: IFF is assured that their money was well spent and they gain the freedom to make their own software enhancements using any qualified .NET developer.

The Challenge:

Determine the Value of the Source Code

IFF needed a .NET expert—fast. They “Googled” the Web for a local developer and found Ray D’Andrade, owner, Bright Network Solutions. Even before meeting face to face, D’Andrade had airline tickets to fly with IFF to Texas to meet with their software vendor. “We wanted to purchase the software source code from our vendor so we could maintain and

manage the software ourselves” said Fred Berenbroick, Director of Application Development. “But no one knew .NET. Ray seemed very knowledgeable, so we took a chance on him.”

IFF knew that purchasing the source code would afford them “hands-on” creative freedoms, but they needed D’Andrade to help them determine what value they were getting for their money —

especially because they would now be internally maintaining and supporting the software application.

As you'd expect, there are many hallmarks of well-written code. One of the most important is its overall framework, for a well structured framework makes bug fixes easier down the road. "If there is poor logic behind the code, then there are problems. Things that should take less than a day to fix, instead take three days as you try to back-track through the code. More expertise is required to get to the problem, more time and money is wasted," says D'Andrade.

After a round of meetings in Texas with the software vendor, D'Andrade supplied IFF with two assessments. The first assessment concluded that the code was indeed of high quality and included recommendations on source control software, server performance improvements, hiring an in-house .NET expert, and a plan for the receipt and testing of the source code to ensure business continuity.

The only modest downside to the source code was that it was overly complicated to meet IFF's needs. "Usually, when I am developing an application for a client, I use development techniques that are simpler so that it is easier for the client to maintain the code with their own employees," says D'Andrade. In this case, the vendor is in the business of selling software products to many customers and making minor modifications to them for each customer. They never intend to provide the source code. Thus, the same development framework serving as the foundation for IFF's application is probably common to nearly all of their products, whether

or not its capabilities are of immediate use to the needs of the software user. This means there is a larger learning curve associated with the software's design, but once a developer gets over this learning curve, the software will be much easier to manage.

The second assessment was done after IFF purchased the software code. D'Andrade received the code, and, using software comparison tools, outlined any missing files or existing file differences and made sure it compiled without any errors. It was also deployed onto a staging area so users could verify that it operated as expected in a test environment. All these tests served to validate that IFF received the correct code that they paid for.

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In just two weeks from the time IFF first called Bright Network, they had the purchased software code fully "live" in production so they could proceed with their business. "Ray's expert knowledge protected our interests and saved us any expensive missteps," says Berenbroick.

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