



Landon Schmidt, Selected Projects

Unova, Inc., Everett, Washington - Role: Sarbanes-Oxley IT Project Manager

Sarbanes-Oxley IT Compliance Audit Project (2004)

Duration: 7 months

Project Value: CA\$7 Million (US\$6 Million)

Team Size: 45

Project Objectives

Due to changes in federal legislation, all US publicly traded organizations were forced to comply with stringent rules on the controls surrounding the production of financial statements. In conjunction with the finance department and internal audit, Landon led an international team of Sarbanes-Oxley IT auditors through design and operational effectiveness reviews. Landon also led all management remediation efforts to comply with regulatory requirements to ensure all identified issues were properly addressed.

Scope Containment

Unova, Inc. was one of the first organizations to review its financial and IT controls for Sarbanes-Oxley legislation compliance. During its review, both the federal government and its external auditors provided new and often divergent guidance numerous times on the depth and breadth of the investigation and assessment. This ill-defined target created a highly stressed environment.

Personnel Challenges

In addition to the scope changes, this multi-billion dollar organization had five IT operations located in four countries. Time zone, languages, and diverse operating environment presented interesting idiosyncrasies that needed to be accommodated in the project plan.

Approach

Landon joined this project as the Sarbanes-Oxley IT Project Manager in mid-cycle. At the time, the project required an overhaul of the project objectives and scope, resources and skill sets, and project timing and integration. In conjunction with the project sponsor, Landon redefined this project plan outlining project activities and milestones. He removed unskilled resources from the project team and replaced them with highly competent Sarbanes-Oxley audit resources



Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Edmonton, Alberta- Role: Firenet Project Director

Firenet Project (2003-2004)

Duration: 9 months

Project Value: CA\$17 Million (US\$12 Million)

Team Size: 40

Project Objectives

This project's focus was to build remote telecommunications modules using VHF, cellular, Globalstar, 900 MHz, and satellite technology to link twelve district offices to forest fire personnel and aircraft. This mission critical system allows lookout staff to quickly communicate forest fire detection to stand-by crews and direct aircraft from initial attack through fire containment and complete extinguishment.

Technical Challenges

Alberta's boreal and mountainous regions present a diverse and challenging environment to deploy an effective radio telecommunications network.

Personnel Challenges

Although project resources were scattered throughout the province, the primary project teams were located in two Alberta locations: Edmonton and Cochrane. Team members traveled across Alberta to deploy telecommunications equipment to mountaintops and other high telecommunication coverage areas.

Approach

Landon joined this project as Project Director at the start of contract renegotiations between the telecommunications network supplier and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD). He successfully directed these renegotiations by understanding the issues raised by both parties, developing a solid relationship with the vendor's senior management, solicitors from Alberta Justice and internal SRD senior management.

Working with Industry Canada (Spectrum), Landon assigned a team of telecommunications engineering consultants to acquire specific VHF frequencies that were key to the successful deployment of the Firenet system. These resources negotiated contract terms with radio frequency conflictees and Industry Canada to ensure SRD had uninterrupted access to the frequency within assigned the geographic location.

Landon developed a rapport with the vendor to establish clear expectations and timelines. He monitored project progress and escalated issues to senior management as required for decisions and resolution.



Prudential Financial, Phoenix, Arizona - Role: Project Manager

Canadian Integrated Relocation Package Project (2002)

Duration: 4 months

Project Value: CA\$1.55 Million (US\$1.0 Million)

Team Size: 27

Project Objectives

This project was initiated to build custom application software for Prudential's major client. This client demanded exacting customer specifications that did not comply with existing software packages. In addition, this project was under an extremely tight timeline.

Landon led a team of business and technical analysts to build a custom .Net/C# application using a combination of locally assigned resources and consultant developers located in another city. This software had to tie into numerous Oracle Financial products, including AP, Projects, AR, and other custom Oracle applications.

Technical Challenges

This project used current software development technology, specifically .Net and C#, to integrate with Oracle Financials. Although the software and corresponding databases were located on central servers, it had to support over two hundred concurrent users located at thirty sites across Canada and in England, Germany and the United States.

Personnel Challenges

The project team was located in five distinct locations: Phoenix, AZ; Denver, CO; Irvine, CA, Valhalla, NY, and Ottawa, ON. Landon coordinated efforts from distinct groups in each of these areas including, subject matter experts, business analysts, human factors engineers, web developers, Oracle DBAs, banking specialists, security, quality assurance, and production support.

Approach

Landon solicited and evaluated proposals from three software development companies. He recommended a technical development team and coordinated professional contracts.

Landon used a variety of communications methods, including teleconferences, email, and in-person meetings to coordinate the efforts of the project team. Clear objectives were established through each phase of the project and each team member understood and committed to meeting their targets.

Because of the high visibility of this project, senior management was involved throughout the process. Regular steering committee meetings were held to discuss project issues and obtain additional resources as required.



Ministry of Human Resources, Victoria, British Columbia - Role: Project Manager

Area Code – Ten-Digit Dialing Project (2001)

Duration: 8 months

Project Value: CA\$0.5 Million (US\$0.35 Million)

Team Size: 35

Project Objectives

The Ministry of Human Resources determined that their application systems and infrastructure did not meet the minimum requirements to facilitate Greater Vancouver's new area code and ten-digit dialing. Landon Schmidt was assigned project manager duties responsible for directing internal and contracted project team members.

Technical Challenges

This project crossed all organizational boundaries and numerous software development projects. A major component of this assignment was negotiating when system upgrades would occur without affecting other systems. In addition, Landon negotiated a British Columbia government-wide telephone number standard with the Ministry of Finance with assistance from Telus, the Canadian Numbering Administrator, and the North American Numbering Plan Administrator. All changes had to be in place before Telus required ten-digit dialing in the Greater Vancouver region on November 3, 2001.

Personnel Challenges

Two competing software development companies provided resources to the project. Landon assisted in the development and issuing of an RFP to bring technical resources onto the project. Although the project was orchestrated through the Ministry's Information Management Branch in Victoria, development staff were scattered around Vancouver and on Vancouver Island. Landon's experience dealing with distance relationships enabled him to steer the project without having to physically meet with the team and reduced project costs.

Approach

Landon worked with senior management to develop and ratify a project charter document that was used to focus project activities. Although this project crossed all organizational boundaries, this assignment had three distinct thrusts: infrastructure (including all telephone, cellular and satellite telephones, facsimile machines, and computer modems), internal and external documents (including stationery, and systems documentation), and minor and major software systems and databases.

Under tight budgetary and travel restrictions, Landon organized and led a fun-filled project kickoff meeting. This meeting brought team members and stakeholders together in a semi-formal environment to share the project vision and build strong team bonds.



City of Albuquerque, Albuquerque, New Mexico - Role: Project Manager and Application and Technical Subject Matter Expert

Year 2000 – Financial Systems Project (1996 – 2000)

Duration: 42 months

Project Value: CA\$2.25 Million (US\$1.5 Million)

Team Size: 25

Project Objectives

The City of Albuquerque requested Landon Schmidt to lead the financial system Y2K upgrade project. All systems had to be installed, brought up to the organization's standards, tested, and implemented. This multi-year project required the City to stabilize their operating environment, expand their use of client-server technology, and web-enable many aspects of their financial systems.

Technical Challenges

Year 2000 compliance requirements forced the City of Albuquerque to upgrade its financial systems. Some systems were upgradeable; others were replaced. Throughout this staged implementation process, the existing financial systems needed to be fully conversant with all other City systems and be implemented well before December 31, 1999. Client-server and web-enabling software were new to the City of Albuquerque. In addition, the City decided to adopt Sybase database standards, which further complicated the process.

Personnel Challenges

The major challenge in this project was to educate existing staff. Several technical members of this team were new to financial software support, and in some cases, to the mainframe-operating environment. In addition, the business and policy specialists had never developed nor executed a comprehensive set of test procedures. Moreover, the production implementation / verification process was a new concept that was developed and adopted.

Approach

Landon's initial assignment was to direct a disjointed project team to build and execute a technology implementation plan. After successful implementation, Landon worked with senior executives, in both the business and technology areas, to develop and execute a project plan that met the Year 2000 criteria.

Where possible, the team upgraded systems in unison to minimize the effect on the user community. Where necessary, the team implemented new software and tied the applications together. Members of the technical team were trained to strengthen their technical skills. Technical mentors were assigned to each team member to reinforce their skills.

The team cooperated in every respect and had no outstanding software issues before or after January 1, 2000.



Ministry of Human Resources, Victoria, BC - Role: Project Manager and Application and Technical Subject Matter Expert

Accounts Receivable Project (1998)

Duration: 8 months

Project Value: CA\$1.5 Million (US\$1.0 Million)

Team Size: 25

Project Objectives

In 1994, the Ministry of Human Resources undertook to recover legitimate Employment Insurance benefits from BC Benefits recipients. Under this program, recipients who were entitled to Employment Insurance payments assigned rights to the Province to collect repayment funds in exchange for BC Benefit payments. This system, implemented with Landon's assistance, continues operate and is the foundation for additional Ministry of Human Resource receivable activities.

Technical Challenges

This project involved an integration of a new Accounts Receivable system with BC Benefits and the Federal Employment Insurance Program provided by Human Resource Development Canada. Often, provincial and federal rules differed, especially in freedom of information instances. Landon worked with federal and provincial policy analysts to defuse confrontational issues.

Personnel Challenges

Three distinct development teams were formed. The financial team was located in Victoria while the technical teams were split between Vancouver and Victoria. After major training efforts and initial support, the software application was handed over to an operational team in Vancouver.

Approach

Because of Landon's familiarity with Ministry business applications, he was able to swiftly establish a project plan, identify and select project team members, and build the reporting relationships. He was a senior member of the project steering committee and provided accurate, complete, and timely information for project decisions. Landon worked with business and policy analysts to establish clear criteria to ensure legal and ethical compliance with provincial and federal legislation. When necessary, Landon assisted the ministry to draft amending legislation.

Despite physical distances between the project teams, Landon worked with the team to ensure each team member had a clear understanding of their project roles and responsibilities. He quickly established a rapport with Federal representatives and maintained a positive relationship with them throughout the life of the project.



American Association of Retired Persons, Washington, DC - Role: Project Manager and Application and Technical Subject Matter Expert

Year 2000 Upgrade Project (1995 – 1996)

Duration: 9 months

Project Value: CA\$1.5 Million (US\$1.0 Million)

Team Size: 50

Project Objectives

In late 1995, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) recognized the need for its systems to be Year 2000 compliant. It embarked upon a series of systems and database upgrades starting with its core applications, primarily the integrated suite of financial systems.

Technical Challenges

An external software vendor provided AARP's financial systems hub. The project team relied heavily on this supplier to deliver and support Y2K certified products according to the vendor's published schedule.

AARP developed several integrated products into its web of financial application systems. These applications were not well documented and the software source was scattered or missing.

Personnel Challenges

Landon helped AARP identify and acquire external consulting resources to assist with the project. The three technical consultants assigned to this project had no exposure to AARP's application environment. These individuals had to be trained before the development process could begin. Landon released one of these individuals from the project due to unsatisfactory performance.

The entire project team, which consisted of over 50 people, was spread across the United States. This created time zone issues with the both the team's technical and business resources.

Approach

Creating strong relationships was key to this project's success. The project sponsor understood and supported the project advice Landon provided. The project team shared a common vision of the project deliverables and was committed to ensuring those goals were met.

Effective communication throughout this project enabled the team to understand team progress, celebrate team successes, and cooperatively participate in solving project difficulties. Landon encouraged meaningful and open communication with all members of the project team, including senior management, to ensure all issues were considered and discussed.



Puerto Rico Water & Sewer Authority, San Juan, Puerto Rico - Role: Project Manager and Application and Technical Subject Matter Expert

Consolidated Hardware and Software replacement project (1991 – 1993)

Duration: 28 months

Project Value: CA\$4.5 Million (US\$3.0 Million)

Team Size: 60

Project Objectives

In conjunction with Dun & Bradstreet Software (Geac), IBM Puerto Rico won a bid to replace hardware and software systems for the Puerto Rico Water and Sewer Authority. All human resource and financial systems, including some mission critical applications, were replaced over a two-year period.

Technical Challenges

The technological changes in this project were staggering. The plan called for a complete transformation of an antiquated VSE shop to a modern MVS platform running DB2. This required massive transformations in hardware, data structures, and support mechanisms.

Personnel Challenges

Union members in the Information Systems department resented the shift in technology. They were content with the old system and were reluctant to learn new methods or participate in the project.

Communicating with the client's project team was difficult as many spoke Spanish only. In addition, over two hundred technical and application specialists (IBM / D&B Software / independent consultants) were used in this project.

Approach

Landon was approached at the mid-point of this contract to take over project management responsibilities. At this point, the project was failing to meet targets dates and deliverables.

Landon reorganized the project team to focus on the core elements required to meet the project objectives. He worked with the client to develop and strengthen key relationships to ensure the client participated in the project. Landon brought skilled, committed staff onto the project to ensure project success.

Within a short period, the project team began to meet its deliverable deadlines. The Information Systems technical representatives started to participate in the project and took control of the software and hardware environments at the end of the project.