

Condat GmbH: Telecooperation in the Software Industry: SME Case 11

Overview

Condat GmbH is a software and consultancy firm with registered office in Berlin and branches in Munich and Neuss. Condat offers system solutions for the information and communication technology sector. The company specialises in the software design for telecommunication systems and also carries out the analysis of corporate processes as well as system development and implementation. The company was founded in 1979 and now employs 120 employees.

The company's particular success factor is its intensive cooperation with teleworkers. External teleworkers who obtain access to the Condat database are hired individually for each project. Condat GmbH considers itself to be a virtual association of customers and developers. Therefore it is hard to imagine Condat GmbH and their telecooperation with their customers without internet and ISDN.

Practice

With SAP and Baan projects, customizing tasks are delegated to external teleworkers. All development tasks are exactly analysed, defined and personally explained. The work is then carried out in cooperation with a small core of external specialists with access to the target system who establish connections to the Condat team via cost-effective and reliable ISDN lines. Through this, permanent information exchange is taking place as all documents and project documentation can be continuously exchanged between everybody involved in the project. The advantages of this work model are the know-how sharing and its impact on the competitiveness of the company.

Condat GmbH participates in a project called Virtuelles Softwarehaus Berlin Brandenburg (*Virtual Software House Berlin Brandenburg*). The project is an initiative of the Society for the Advancement of the Middle-sized Software Industry in Berlin and Brandenburg (SIBB e.V. – *Gesellschaft zur Förderung der mittelständischen Softwareindustrie in Berlin und Brandenburg e.V.*). In addition to Condat GmbH, ten other companies and institutes participate in this initiative. The Virtual Software House is an internet based platform for inter-firm cooperation between small and middle-sized companies in the software sector. It provides all cooperation partners with access to information about the companies and their performance profiles by means of tenders to contract and offers. With any kind of cooperation, both the flexibility and the economical and legal independence of the companies remain preserved.

Experience

The tendency these days is that customers request comprehensive data processing solutions. The SMEs, however, are mainly specialised in particular niche products, showing that such a model for cooperation is gaining more and more significance for the SMEs. „Solutions, that show no weak components and that therefore are even competitive when compared to the large system suppliers, emerge from the flexible combination of companies, all of whom contribute specific know-how to the cooperation – one might say their core competence. The possibility, to tender as cooperation for public tenders, that are often too large-scale for individual software suppliers, is a further advantage“, says Pedro Schäffer, managing director of Condat GmbH and SIBB e.V. board of directors member.

A specific example of the cooperation with two local companies is the state environmental information system (LUIS – *Landesumweltinformationssystem*) created for the Department of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Regional Planning in Potsdam. Condats' involvement was the project management and system planning. One partner undertook that part of the project involving the geographical information system (GIS) and the second partner contributed elements of the system architecture. „Eventhough the prime contract was with us, we would have not been able to complete this task, with a volume of between five and six manpower years, to this quality and within the required time frame, on our own. By cooperating with two other, highly specialised middle-sized companies, we were able to even prevail against large competitors during the selection process.“

All at Condat are in agreement that some requirements must be met for the successful implementation of the potentials provided by telecooperation. First of all it is important that the partners deal with each other openly and are actually convinced of the advantages of cooperation. „It is not good if one of the partners in the cooperation is only concerned about those elements of the job that are not covered by their company“ cautions Pedro Schäffer. Therefore clear task allotment and the separation of responsibilities is extremely important.

With all the advantages and the potential for the success of telecooperation, personal contact between the project partners must not be neglected. „Success cannot be reduced to technical competence but to the outcome of efficient, personal communication“.