

THE PROJECT

Development and Staff Augmentation for Digital Publisher

 Web Development

 \$1,000,000 - \$9,999,999

 Jan. 2014 - Ongoing

Project summary:

Umbrella IT provides staff augmentation for engineering service roles on an ongoing basis for a digital publisher. Their talent contributions fluctuate as needed and the team contributes in a variety of technical capacities.

THE REVIEW

“They bend over backwards to give us what we need, when we need it.”

OCT 11, 2019

Feedback summary:

Umbrella IT's efforts have been met with high praise. The team members put customer service first and go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure their clients are satisfied. Customers can expect a strong work force that takes no issue with scaling up or down.

Minimize Review 



5.0 

Quality: 5.0

Schedule: 5.0

Cost: 5.0

Willing to refer: 5.0

THE REVIEWER

Vice President of Technology, Penske Media Corporation



Jared Canova

 Media

 1,001-5,000 Employees

 Los Angeles, California

 Phone Interview 

 Verified

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BACKGROUND

Introduce your business and what you do there.

I'm the vice president of the technology of the partner network at Penske Media Corporation. We're a digital publisher that owns a number of different brands, which include monetization and a publisher network.

OPPORTUNITY / CHALLENGE

What challenge were you trying to address with Umbrella IT?

Initially, we needed help with fixed-scope projects. Later, we recognized we needed more of an elastic workforce, so we moved to a staff augmentation model with Umbrella IT. We wanted to the ability to have, remove, and change skill sets on the team at will.

SOLUTION

What was the scope of their involvement?

Umbrella IT has been effective at getting us the right talent, very quickly. Their personnel has done a number of projects for us; the lion's share of their work has been serving as an engineering force. We've used them in reprogramming and data engineering for various technologies. Additionally, we also use them for QA and project management.

Past projects include content management services, microservices architecture, middleware, frontend development, and WordPress based websites, just to name a few. They also manage all the management tools for the partner network as well as all of the publishing sites and a lot of internal administrative tools.

What is the team composition?

Our team varies quite a bit. On the low end, we're augmenting our team with three people from Umbrella IT. On the high end, we've had as many as a dozen people at a time.

How did you come to work with Umbrella IT?

Initially, one of the companies that we acquired had been using them for project work. After we decided to implement the staff augmentation model, we started using Umbrella IT on a more permanent basis.

How much have you invested with them?

We've invested more than \$5 million.

What is the status of this engagement?

We began working together in 2014, and our engagement is ongoing.

What evidence can you share that demonstrates the impact of the engagement?

Generally speaking, we tend to retain Umbrella talent more than other firms. While I've had to cut back and even close the contracts of other companies we work with, we view the Umbrella team as part of our team. They've grown with us and we've given them an opportunity to learn, and they've pitched into help well beyond just in engineering. We've shared a very close partnership, as a result.

For example, one of their project managers filled in as a product manager for a few months while we were looking to backfill, and they did an excellent job of building relationships with our stakeholders. Another one of their engineers has been with us for 4-5 years and was recently promoted to a more senior technical role in our company; he's really grown in the role and it shows. Overall, they tend to focus on solutions and outcomes more than just tickets. They're not just an outsource firm for us, they're intricately involved in our process from planning all the way to execution.

How did Umbrella IT perform from a project management standpoint?

They've time-shifted their work to be available during the day for us even though they're remote. It's very beneficial and has helped with communication but also with building the team as a cohesive unit. They attend standups, meetings with our users to explain how things work.

What did you find most impressive about them?

They bend over backward to give us what we need when we need it. They've been flexible with scheduling and even rates, at times, where we need to make rapid swings and changes in talent as business fluctuates. With other partners, during those same times, had a lot of friction in the process. It was totally different from Umbrella. Our account manager would come out and visit Russia to visit us and ask what we needed and would find a way to do it. It's something I haven't seen with our other providers.

Are there any areas they could improve?

At this point, things are pretty good. There was a time when one of the other providers had a local presence in the states and they were able to send staff on-site to work side by side with our team. It would be great if Umbrella would consider providing the same option.

Do you have any advice for potential customers?

My advice, if it's a non-technical organization, is to have reasonable expectations for hiring engineering personnel. Honestly, Umbrella is one of the easier firms to work with. They can work effectively in a fixed scope or augmentation model. If they're in a fixed scope project, make sure they have clear requirements and expectations. If they're in an augmentation model, then make sure there are no communication barriers.