



Sun Managed Services — Team Teaching Enterprise IT Change

By Anne MacFarland

An enterprise's attitude to seeking help and taking advice from external sources is a defining characteristic. We all know the caricatures at the extremes. There is the classic provincialism of the *not invented here – won't work here* mentality. Then there is the worldly view - *it must be a good idea if it comes from (add company, city, or state name here)*, with its usually unvoiced corollary, *home-grown will not be good enough*. Either philosophy is often based on a combination of corporate history, morale and economic models. Personality clashes also weigh in. These extreme attitudes used to be amusing or exasperating, but were something to be worked with or around.

Now, provincialism and rampant cosmopolitanism have become strategically and economically unsupportable. The cost is often too high to maintaining expertise in all the ways technology can be used to support business processes. **Still, many enterprises that have found success with technology fear losing control if they outsource, or just have no appetite for marriage-like outsourcing relationships.**

Effecting IT change these days is a complex consideration. When (and for how long) do you need the breadth of expertise of a specialist? How many kinds of specialization do you need? What kinds of specialists can you maintain in-house on an ongoing basis? Then there is the matter of *whom do you trust*, and whether their business model is sustainable. And, always, it is a matter of money – how much will you save, if any, and what is the risk of escalating costs over which you may have little leverage beyond saying “No!”

Sun Managed Services has been revamped from a break-fix, Sun-centric organization, to a more externally ambitious, billion dollar business. More importantly, its business model sees service engagements as finite occasions of knowledge transfer rather than as accretions of fairly permanent engagements, though of course they will support longer-germ engagements as well. It does not seek to become a pervasive empire, but to be a carefully-honed tool, working with partners to access additional expertise as needed. Yes, other enterprise service organizations offer transitional services, but usually as a practice, not as a basis of their product business.

The advantage of this finite, partner-based approach is that there are ample customer control points. Qualifications in a specific area (certifications and/or experience) can be designated and alternatives considered. **Sun is not competing with its subcontractors, but manages them.** Alternatively, depending on the nature of the engagement, another specialist partner may take the lead, and Sun Services will be a member of the team. There is always an accountable leader. **Sun's team of experts acts to accelerate the often tedious pace of traditional enterprise IT change management. This is a significant and useful alternative to the expense of in-house expertise or the additional bureaucracy of outsourcing.**

The long-term value of Sun's approach depends on effective transfer, not only of the requisite skills, but of the knowledge gained from long experience. Knowledge transfer has always been a dicey proposition in the enterprise. **With the external, temporary engagement of Sun Managed Services, the appropriate gang of consultants educates your team in the use of new technologies, and then they move on.** This approach may be just what your enterprise needs.



About The Clipper Group, Inc.

The Clipper Group, Inc., is an independent consulting firm specializing in acquisition decisions and strategic advice regarding complex, enterprise-class information technologies. Our team of industry professionals averages more than 25 years of real-world experience. A team of staff consultants augments our capabilities, with significant experience across a broad spectrum of applications and environments.

The Clipper Group can be reached at 781-235-0085 and found on the web at www.clipper.com.

About the Author

Anne MacFarland is Director of Enterprise Systems Research with The Clipper Group.

Ms. MacFarland specializes in strategic solutions offered by enterprise systems and storage vendors, in trends in enterprise systems and networks, and in explaining these trends and the underlying technologies in simple business terms. She joined The Clipper Group after a long career in library systems, business archives, consulting, research, and freelance writing. Ms. MacFarland earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Cornell University, where she was a College Scholar, and a Masters of Library Science from Southern Connecticut State University.

- **Reach Anne MacFarland via e-mail at AnneM@clipper.com or at 781-235-0085 Ext. 28. (When you hear the automated attendant, please dial "1-28".)**

Regarding Trademarks and Service Marks

The Clipper Group Navigator, The Clipper Group Explorer, The Clipper Group Observer, The Clipper Group Captain's Log, and "clipper.com" are trademarks of The Clipper Group, Inc., and the clipper ship drawings, "*Navigating Information Technology Horizons*", and "*teraproductivity*" are service marks of The Clipper Group, Inc. The Clipper Group, Inc., reserves all rights regarding its trademarks and service marks. All other trademarks, etc., belong to their respective owners.

Disclosure

Officers and/or employees of The Clipper Group may own as individuals, directly or indirectly, shares in one or more companies discussed in this bulletin. Company policy prohibits any officer or employee from holding more than one percent of the outstanding shares of any company covered by The Clipper Group. The Clipper Group, Inc., has no such equity holdings.

Regarding the Information in this Issue

The Clipper Group believes the information included in this report to be accurate. Data has been received from a variety of sources, which we believe to be reliable, including manufacturers, distributors, or users of the products discussed herein. The Clipper Group, Inc., cannot be held responsible for any consequential damages resulting from the application of information or opinions contained in this report.