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Solutions for the Real World

PDSA Special Report

Justifying the Cost of Purchasing a
Framework

The Problem

A new potential customer calls you with a new project. They have a medium-sized business application for you to develop. They want a web site for the internal users and external users to use. They need to be able to login users that come from the outside the firewall using a login page. For internal users, they want to use Active Directory. They want the ability for a non-technical person to be able to add users to the system. They want to define roles and permissions that they can use to control what menu items are shown to which roles. They want to be able to control access to pages based on roles and/or permissions. They want to be able to either disable or make certain controls on certain pages based on roles or permissions.

They have some other requirements as well. They have to follow HIPAA compliance rules as closely as possible. This means strong passwords, forcing users to change passwords every 30 days, not allowing the reuse of the last 3 passwords, tracking each user as they move throughout the system, etc. In addition, all admin changes to the system (adding users, roles, etc.) must be logged.

They need you to store all application-wide settings in the registry on the web server, and the settings have to be encrypted. They have some users located at a remote site with limited bandwidth, so the pages that transfer down must be as lightweight as possible. They also want to see all exceptions that occur on the system logged to a database table, and an email sent to multiple people so any errors on the application can be dealt with right away.

But Wait There's More...

That is a lot of requirements they have given you, and they have not even told you what the application is supposed to do yet! There are still hundreds of pages to develop with lots of business logic to code up. Along with these hundreds of pages you also need to design and build the database with a couple hundred tables. You will also need to write stored procedures for all the Create, Read, Update and Delete (CRUD) logic to manipulate data in those tables.

Oh... and one more thing, they want all this done in 6 months! How are you going to build all this for your potential new client within that time frame? Where do you even start? You

know you might have some of the methods and pages in other sites you built for other clients, but it will take a lot of copy and pasting and fixing up of code to make it all come together. This will take a lot of time just to get the basic requirements they need, let alone develop all their business pages that they need.

Make Versus Buy Decision

If you think that the above requirements are not something that you would get from a client then you probably are fine doing things the way you have always done them. If you see these types of requirements from your clients all the time, then now might just be the time to consider creating or purchasing a Framework that will do all these things for you.

So let's consider if we were to come up with our estimate of how long it would take to build a Framework to perform all the basic requirements this client has. This is what such a spreadsheet might look like:

Justifying a Framework		
Your Billing Rate	\$ 100.00	
Your Hours Per Day	7	
	Hours	Total Cost
Reusable Component	To Create	To Create
Template Application with Data Driven Menu System	24	\$2,400
Large Library of easy-to-use business classes	40	\$4,000
Audit Tracking of records that are changed	24	\$2,400
Flexible Login System using Forms based Authentication, Active Directory, or even a combination of the two	120	\$12,000
User/Roles/Permission System that includes all maintenance pages, page and control level security.	120	\$12,000
HIPPA Compliance for Security	40	\$4,000
Configuration Management System	24	\$2,400
Exception Handling System	24	\$2,400
User Login Tracking, Page-Level Tracking	24	\$2,400
Cryptography System	24	\$2,400
View State Persistence to keep pages lightweight	24	\$2,400
Data Driven Web Page Creator	120	\$12,000
Session Variable Management	16	\$1,600
Utilities that make repetitive tasks much faster and less error-prone	120	\$12,000
Purchase a Code Generator and learn to use it	24	\$2,400
	Total Cost	768 76,800
	Total # of Days to Create	110

OK. This is a lot of hours, and a lot of money for your client to spend, and they have not even gotten any of their business pages coded yet! This could break their budget and force them to look elsewhere for a company that already has a Framework that does all their base requirements.

So, next you think, I will purchase a Framework that already has those things so I can just start developing the clients' business problem. If you look around, you won't find many Frameworks that do all these things. If you do, they cost large amounts of money. Usually they will cost anywhere from \$2,500 - \$20,000. The lower end ones won't have everything you need, so you will still have to create many of the requirements yourself. The higher end ones will have all the features you need you just have to justify the cost. So, let's discuss how you do justify it.

Justifying the Cost

Let's say you are getting ready to pony-up \$5,000 for a Framework you have found that has all the core requirements from your client. You somehow have to charge your client for the cost of that \$5,000. This actually becomes very simple. Just show your client the above spreadsheet that you created with the hours and dollars. Then show them the Framework that you are purchasing and explain how for just \$5,000 and just a couple weeks of learning curve for you and you will save them over \$71,000! Believe me; they will have no problem coughing up the \$5,000 investment. You should tell them that you will eat the cost of your training time to make them feel better about this decision.

Now, if they still have a problem with paying you for this, you have a couple of choices. 1). Run from this customer as fast as you can (because you will probably have more problems with them in the future), or 2). Tell them that you will spread the cost out over your next client as well, so they can just pay you \$2,500 for all this functionality.

From here on, for each new client, you will go through this same exercise. In no time at all, you will begin to make money on your \$5,000 investment in this new Framework you purchased.

Summary

The cost of a good Framework can actually end up making you money if you present it to your customers in the right way. So an initial investment on your part will make your customers happy, make you more productive, and will most likely lead to more business as word gets out about how robust your applications are.

Looking for a Framework like the one mentioned in this Special Report? Check out the PDSA .NET Productivity Framework at <http://www.PDSAFramework.com>.

Contact Information

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