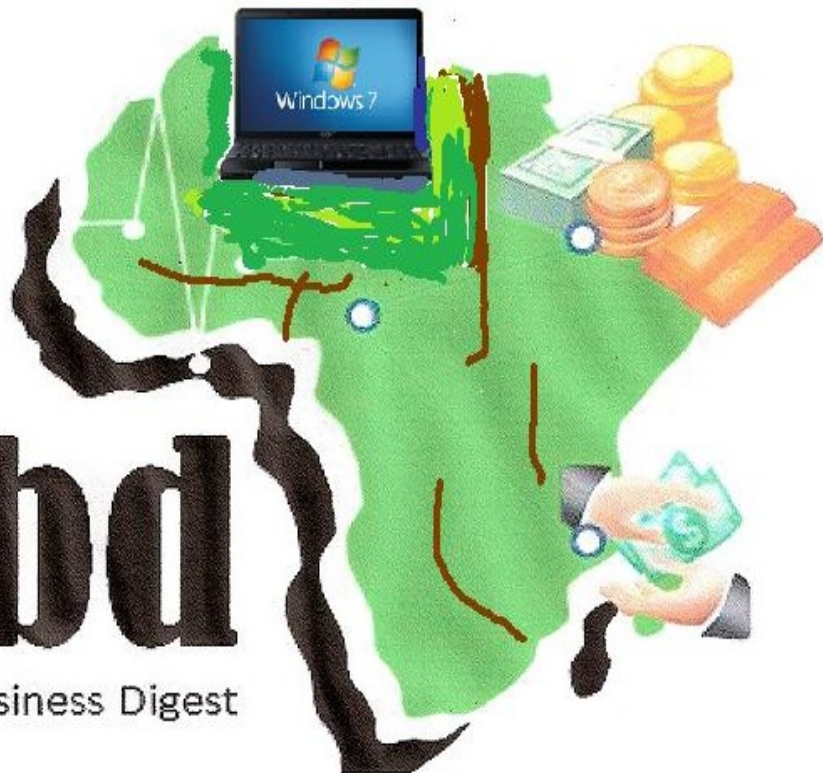




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Africa Business Digest



A monthly on-line digest comprising highlights of current business developments, essay and best practices on project and operations management for professionals with interest in the economic development of Africa.

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Courses

Training dates for Oracle Primavera Project Management Courses

- For Basic course: August 3rd - 5th , 8th - 10th , 22nd - 24th
- For Advanced Course: August 15th - 17th

Venue: Total Technology Consultants Limited, Training Room,
Flat 4 God's Grace Estate, 5 Waterworks Road, Rumuola, Port Harcourt.

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1. Introduction: Sooner or Later, You will Need Cloud Computing as a Project or a Business Manager

In our developing economy, we face many restrictions as we are always playing catch-up with the developed world in science and technology. Current technological advancement is such that information technology (IT) has moved from the client-server option to web hosted applications and now to Cloud Computing. Sadly, many of our local businesses, political and economic development organisations, both large and small, are still clinging tightly to sophisticated client-server personal computer systems. We seem to be oblivious to the truth that producers of our application software packages for project management, operations management and indeed almost areas of business management have moved on. They have gone past the client-server technology and are now producing software solutions for web-hosted applications and for Cloud Computing. At the risk of repeating this story, my apologies if you have read it before in our newsletter, it was at a meeting in Reading, England in May 2010, that the executive vice president of Oracle Primavera Global Business Unit, told this writer clearly and unequivocally that the rest of the world cannot stand still waiting for Africa. The occasion was when a case was being made for the retention of Primavera client-server solutions for customers in Sub-Saharan Africa. We were told that they were being scrapped since web-hosted applications were to be produced in future as replacements.

The lesson therefore is that if we fail to move with advancements in technology we may find ourselves in a scenario that we are stranded and left clutching at obsolete unsupported software solutions which the original producers have abandoned. We may find some of them unusable and our costly business systems gradually grinding to a halt. This may be a worst-case scenario but except we heed the writing on the wall to wake up and march forward with the rest of the world, our experiences in the future may not be too far removed from a situation that we could become isolated, helpless and marooned in an “island” of obsolete technologies.

2. Cloud Computing

‘Moving to the cloud’ has become a much used industry buzz term over recent months. Cloud computing is based on the concept that IT should largely be delivered as a service over the Internet. Documents, emails, applications and other business data will be accessed online or ‘in the cloud’, making them available from any PC, laptop or mobile device, and importantly, in real-time.

Cloud means Internet. The computing takes place on the Internet in stead of the software used in executing on desktop personal computer. It is hosted on the Internet on a server installed in a data centre usually staffed by people who are experts in managing technology. This “cloud” software is sometimes called “on demand” or

Software as a Service (SaaS). The name cloud computing was inspired by the cloud symbol that is often used to represent the “internet” in flowcharts and diagrams.

By way of a summary, a cloud service has three distinct characteristics that differentiate it from traditional hosting: Firstly, it is sold on demand. Secondly, it is elastic in the sense that users can have as much or as little of a service as they want at any given time. Lastly, the service is fully managed by the provider such that the consumer needs nothing but a personal computer and Internet access. We shall elaborate on some of these points as we take a look at the benefits of Cloud Computing.

Benefits

- Cloud computing offers attractive benefits especially at this financially constrained times when many companies are looking to do more for less. For example, to run business applications, companies would previously have needed high-specification PCs and servers in-house. Internal networks would also have required significant investment and management. Cloud applications, in contrast, require no more infrastructure than an Internet connection and can even work wirelessly on a range of mobile devices. This capability will enable an organisation to reduce upfront capital expense greatly - a key consideration in the current economic downturn.
- By switching to cloud computing, one can cut maintenance costs because services and applications run from inside a web server.
- Unlike traditional client-server approaches, cloud applications do not consume valuable internal resources. Instead, IT personnel or team can now focus on deploying more applications or delivering new projects that drive business benefits and innovation.
- Speed of implementation and seamless upgrades are also benefits. For companies, especially SMEs, the ability to respond quickly to opportunity or threat can be a key differentiator. Cloud computing helps facilitate this feature.
- Cloud-based applications can be operational in a few days. In addition, migrating to this approach allows one to scale up or down immediately, safe in the knowledge that one's applications are receiving security and performance enhancements automatically at no additional cost.
- This instant scalability means companies can grow and shrink in line with the market. In today's difficult economic conditions, this constitutes a compelling benefit, especially for SMEs, who are particularly vulnerable when times are tough. With these scalable services, one can select one's own level of engagement and upgrade easily in future.
- In line with this reasoning, new businesses may choose to use all their applications in the cloud. If one is starting from scratch, for example, one will want to be up and running as quickly as one can. In contrast, more established businesses might opt to move gradually to cloud computing as the on-premise software they have bought comes up for renewal.
- And in the most common scenario for business today, cloud computing often co-exists with other software systems used in house. In fact, using a cloud service that is open, standards-based, secure and can be easily integrated with existing systems through a powerful API (application programming interface). In that event,

standard middleware packages, will ensure continued success and rapid application deployment and collaboration between business users and IT.

- Software tools delivered through the Internet also enable one to be more mobile. One is not tied to particular desktop PCs where specific software is installed. As long as one can get online, one can access all the data and tools that one needs.

3. A Cloud-Computing Success Story: Remote Media Improves Customer Service and Sales

Remote Media, a digital signage company, has implemented the Sales Cloud and Service Cloud enabling it to boost sales productivity and enhance customer service delivery. Since migrating to the new solution, the company has experienced a 100% increase in sales productivity and a ten-fold increase in digital signage trial requests. Following a roll out of CRM in just two months, Remote Media now has drill-down, at-a-glance insight into the most lucrative sales opportunities, ensuring effective targeting and immediate follow-up. Working in the cloud provides the entire organisation – together with a global network of channel partners – with a shared, real-time view of each digital signage customer and prospect as well as a completely integrated, end-to-end system for managing each relationship. For SME organisations like Remote Media, this is key in driving business growth.

4. Cloud Computing and Project Management

The following are the implications that cloud computing mean to project management. It is also the case that these benefits are not all limited to project management but are applicable to any business management specialty which uses information technology.

- Convenient web-based project management software (ProjectOffice.net, MindManager, etc.)
- Greener project management
- Lower costs
- Elimination of unnecessary hardware
- Incredible scalability
- Ease of information sharing between delivery team members, customer team members and executive management
- Rapid dashboard info on portfolio of projects
- More remote management
- Meetings using web-based tools
- Add-on software part of the cloud and not a requirement for your customer to have loaded on his users' machines

5. Some Information You Need as a New Project Manager

According to the original author, this is a personal overview of what a new manager needs the first day, the first week and the first month on a new project.

1. You need to determine these initial points:

- Determine the goals of the project
- Determine scope of the project and risk status
- Determine how project fits the company scope
- Establish base-point: Items completed and user sign-off
- Determine status of existing specifications: On target or not?
- Design in layers..... Implement in layers

2. You may need next to review status reporting. Managers new on the job can easily give daily status. This assists involvement with the user community.

In the status report, each step should be depicted by a green arrow / yellow arrow/ red arrow to show on-target / potential problem / major problems respectively. These arrows can be used to indicate progress, showing improvement or lack-of-improvement. Graphics are a requirement.

3. Spend time with the user group, try and find the real decision maker in the group and become good friends.

4. Enforce user sign-offs. Establish criteria for project scope and how to handle modifications to scope. Scope crawl is a slippery slope since as the new person running a project, you will get false direction. Be careful.

5. When building project timing, you best use a 2x factor to conduct User Testing.

Critical items:

- Determine project status
- Determine critical users
- Establish bench-marks
- Review completeness of specifications
- Stick to an approved plan
- Post the plan in a room set aside for "project status." That way, everyone can see project status
- Know the user community
- Know your team
- Build enough time for user testing
- Implement in pieces and layers
- Keep effective and timely status to everyone
- Continually seek user approval
- Celebrate small victories with the team
- Utilize a "team effort" that leads to "team success"
- Never lose site of how this project affects the company

This scenario can be used for technology, finance, anything where a manager is brought into a project at a point where the project has been started and needs to be completed.

This again is a slippery slope to conduct business, but you better be ready.

Acknowledgement: This material has been adapted from an article by Jim Carlson, a Senior Consultant with Careers-In-Transition.com

6. Ways to Learn more Efficiently

Continuous learning is critical to our career. It is said that he who ceases to learn is already half-dead.

Technology and organizations change, and with those changes comes the need for us to adapt accordingly.

Once we cease learning, technology—as well as our competitors—will pass us by. Here are tips to help us with learning, regardless of subject.

Frequency is more effective than duration

The day before an examination, we could study for five hours straight. Chances are, though, we could do better if we instead studied for one hour, or even half an hour, each day during the previous five days. Our mind learns through regular repetition, meaning that a single “cramming” session will be less effective than regular periodic study, even if the total cram time is longer. So we should focus on increasing the frequency of our studying, rather than duration.

Learn actively rather than passively

When reading materials, do not just focus solely on what is there. We should ask ourselves why a certain condition is what it is. Ask ourselves what changes would produce a different result. The most extreme form of active learning is to contact the author of the material with questions, comments, and suggestions. We may not get an answer, but our efforts will reinforce our learning.

Try to find a personal connection

If we can relate the material we are studying to something in our own life, our retention will be greater.

Leverage what we know

If we are trying to learn an apparently new concept, think about how that concept relates to something we already know. For example, if we are a financial analyst who is trying to understand network security. In learning about firewalls, for example, we could try to draw analogies to a bank teller. Or in learning about logical views and data, we could draw analogies to actual song files on an iPod vs. playlists that merely reference those songs.

Use the knowledge

To retain the knowledge, we need to apply what we have learned. If we are not on an assignment that makes use of what we have learned, we should talk to our boss about it. Otherwise, we should take the initiative ourselves and volunteer for such a project.

Teach what we have learned

The best way to master a subject is to teach it, because not only must we know the material, we must be able to explain it as well. In preparing for a class or session, we will realize those areas we need to refresh ourselves on. In addition, while we are actually teaching, we may get questions that make us think about the material.

Get someone review our work

“Practice makes perfect,” so the saying goes. Actually, unless someone can observe and correct us, practice might merely make permanent our errors rather than creating improvements that should make our work perfect. Every once in a while, we should check with someone who knows the subject. That person might have additional pointers or can correct any mistaken ideas we have.

Set realistic goals

We have a greater chance of mastering the material if we set goals for ourselves— and write them down. Make the goals realistic, so that we do not get discouraged, but force ourselves to “stretch” to achieve them. Then, when we do, simply cross them out.

Do not just read; take notes

By taking notes, we involve ourselves actively in the learning process. Writing things down reinforces the material we are studying. In doing so, we can highlight questions we have or even disagreements with the author. We will learn much more than if we simply read the material.

Write about what we have learned

Writing about the material is similar to teaching, except that we generally will not have “live” interaction with students. Still, the writing process forces us to verify our knowledge. If done correctly, it can raise our professional visibility and exposure. Besides, nothing beats seeing our name in print.

Break things down

The way to eat an elephant, so the riddle goes, is to do so one bite at a time. Do we have a long audio file that we are trying to learn? Can we break that file down into smaller ones, perhaps via an audio editor such as Audacity? By doing so, we can repeat important points more easily because we are rewinding within a smaller file, rather than a larger one.

Acknowledgement: This has been adapted from an article by Calvin Sun

7. ABD Marketplace

We represent the following vendors and offer their solutions as discussed in this marketplace:

- Oracle Primavera Global Business Unit
- International Business Liaison Professionals
- Autodesk Representatives
- Bentley Solutions
- Bamboo Solutions

Oracle Primavera and Oracle University Representative: Total Technology Consultants Limited (TTC) - The Premier Oracle Primavera Project Management Training and Software Solutions Provider In Nigeria
We, in TTC, can provide you with Oracle Primavera Project Management training and software solutions at your offices in Nigeria if and when requested.

Who we are: Since 2003, we have been working with Primavera, initially as the only Primavera Authorised Representative in Nigeria until 2009. With the takeover of Primavera by Oracle, we have become a Gold Level Reseller of Oracle University for Primavera courses and of Oracle Primavera Global Business Unit.

International Business Liaison Professionals

We are the International Business Liaison Professionals with sound business skills and background who

stand ready to execute your projects or assignments in the UK or in Nigeria.

To our African professional, entrepreneur, public or private sector executive:

Do you need to make purchases in Europe?

- A software product
- An equipment
- An industrial plant
- A mechanical, electrical or any engineering
- A follow-up to an ongoing business discussion

To our UK or European professional, entrepreneur business executive:

- Do you need to be represented in a meeting in Nigeria?
- Do you have a business errand which should be carried out in the Niger Delta area, Abuja or Lagos or any other part of Nigeria?

To both African and UK or European business professionals:

- Save you the hassle of travel and all associated with it.
- Utilise your opportunity cost: Engage yourself profitably in other important tasks while we conduct your business for you in Europe or in Africa
- Enjoy the best of both worlds: do what you do best, your work; while
- We do what we do best; handling your business problems.

AutoDesk Representatives

We represent AutoDesk, a world leader in 2D and 3D design, engineering, and entertainment software.

AutoCAD is about the most popular of their products. There are however other Autodesk products. All these find applications in the following industries:

- Architecture, Engineering & Construction
- Automotive & Transportation
- Education
- Government covering
- Manufacturing
- Media & Entertainment
- Utilities & Telecommunications
- Easy Design Tools

Bentley Solutions

We represent Bentley. It is a company that delivers solutions for the entire lifecycle of the infrastructure asset, tailored to the needs of the various professions — the engineers, architects, planners, contractors, fabricators, IT managers, operators and maintenance engineers — who will work on and work with that asset over its lifetime. Comprised of integrated applications and services built on an open platform, each

solution is designed to ensure that information flows between work flow processes and project team members to enable interoperability and collaboration.

Bamboo Solutions

We also represent Bamboo solutions, a software technology provider specializing in hosted, collaborative software *solutions* for information management built on SharePoint technology. Bamboo® Solutions provides software that helps organizations save significant time and money by deploying and managing applications, data and users on Microsoft SharePoint. They provide technologies that augment the SharePoint platform, and more than 60 products that provide a broad range of enhanced capabilities and solutions that maximize the value of SharePoint deployments. Some of their solutions include the following:

- The one-stop alert solution for SharePoint
- Calendaring Solution in SharePoint
- Powerful, flexible SharePoint list columns
- Display data the way it was meant to be seen
- Bamboo's Project Management for SharePoint
- Workflow Conductor
- Apps & Solutions

Total Technology Consultants Limited

Our offices

In Nigeria: Our training facilities are located at our office in Port Harcourt at 4 God's Grace Estate, 5 Waterworks Road, Rumuola. **Contact phone no.: 08037100284**

In the UK: Our office is at Fairview, Duke Street, Withington, Hereford. From this office, we are able to guarantee timely delivery because we not only propose and order but we also follow up on your requirements to ensure that we deliver on our promises.

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