



Bright Minds, Brilliant Solutions

SUCCESS STORY
HEALTH MARKET SCIENCE

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Interview with Alan Horton, Senior Director of Development, Health Market Science

Client Profile



Health Market Science (HMS) is a leading supplier of provider data and end-to-end solutions that address data management, regulatory compliance and market intelligence. As Senior Director of Development at HMS, Alan Horton faced an issue common to fast-growing companies in a hot market. He needed to manage more projects with his existing staff. To meet the company's software development goals, Horton needed a way to add capacity without breaking the bank.

His original approach was to set up three teams to focus on separate product lines. Each team's goal was two-fold: enhance existing products with customer enhancement requests, and secondly, build new market-ready services. "I realized that I needed more talent to complete product backlog work in a shorter timeframe and, at the same time, increase our speed-to-market with new features," said Horton.

Putting Developers to the Test

After his initial evaluation, Horton looked at outsourcing services to India as well as KMS Technology, an offshore development center in Vietnam. To ensure a sound evaluation, he submitted coding problems for KMS developers to solve. "KMS came out head and shoulders above the rest," said Alan. "They solved the problem in a way that I would have expected an experienced and well-rounded developer to solve it. I also believed that KMS's leadership style was a good fit for our demands," added Horton.

To stay ahead of the competition while meeting customer expectations, Health Market Science decided to formalize the partnership with KMS. "We wanted to augment our team with talent that could become immediately productive and grow to become an extension of our own," said Horton. Hybrid teams, comprised of onshore and offshore team members, were set up. "We're a scrum shop, so each month we scope upcoming work and prioritize needs and execute the plan across the teams," said Horton.

Start Small, Grow Big



The plan was to start KMS with a smaller project - a mature application that needed maintenance attention. This approach would free up Horton's in-house team for new development. The project included customer-requests and important bug fixes. Horton explained to the first KMS lead developer, "There are no resources to help you ramp up. You'll need to act on your own with a set of less-than-tight requirements." KMS had no problem becoming self-sufficient. They succeeded in fixing bugs, making changes and creating a release. "After testing, the work passed our standard QA requirements and we were able to put it into production. With that level of success, we started expanding the team," said Horton.

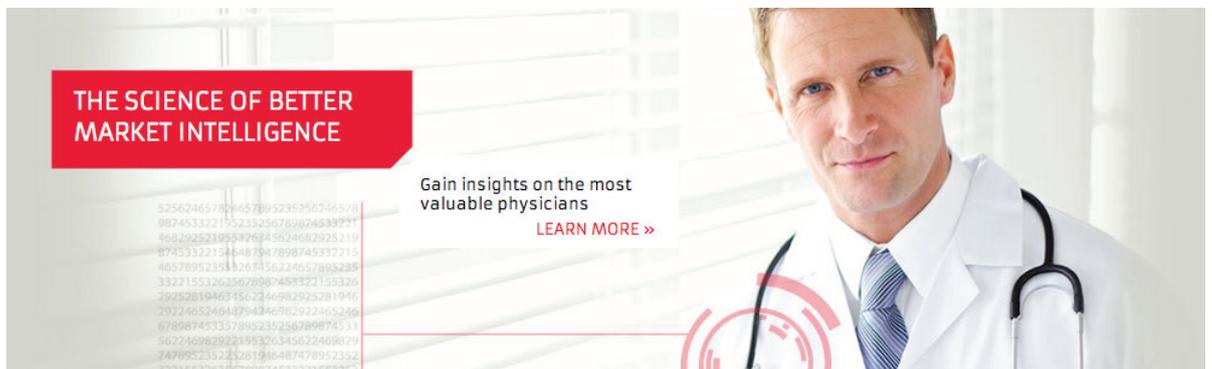
Agility is key when dealing with new technology, reassignment of roles, acceleration and deceleration on the pace of projects. "KMS's team allows us to get high-quality products to market quickly. When business needs dictate a change of direction, we can change and adjust quickly and deliver."

Fix Problems, Don't Dwell on Them

There have been few issues with the KMS/HMS partnership, "an amazing track record," Alan said. Poor code quality and uneasy team dynamics were limited to a single instance. "KMS and HMS were able to address both with no impact to work flow. That goes back to honesty and a true partner approach that I was looking for," said Horton.

“KMS allows us to get high-quality products to market quickly... they can be trusted to make enhancements to our core products... helping us keep our clients satisfied.”

Low Turnover Means High Production



Offshore outsourcing often suffers from employee turnover. Bucking this trend, KMS has a turnover rate of four percent. “One of the horror stories I’ve heard is how much turnover there is in the offshore business. I haven’t experienced high turnover in the staff that works for us. In fact, the KMS turnover rate isn’t different from HMS’s. That fact really differentiates KMS from all the others.”

Customer Implementation and Satisfaction

HMS clients have been pleased with the responsiveness and the outcome of work that, behind the scenes, was completed by KMS. Customers require implementation set up with every new solution and KMS is part of that team too. Plans are underway to expand the KMS team to handle more implementation services and core product maintenance. “With a six-month positive track record, we made the leap of faith and augmented our team, increasing the KMS team to 20,” said Horton. “Again, KMS can be trusted to make fixes and enhancements to our core products that we otherwise wouldn’t have the time to make,” reported Horton.

Comparable Leadership Values

Alan believes leadership is a combination of three linked qualities: Positive results, open-mindedness and honesty. “Focusing on results, having an open mind and being honest about any given situation, these are the values KMS demonstrates and were a key factor in our decision to partner with them.”

Of course, communication is key as well. “Agreement on the problem and how to solve it ensures a smooth outcome. There’s no wasting time trying to figure out what the other person is trying to tell you,” said Horton.

Sharing Common Goals

HMS has found a really good collaboration partner with KMS. “We’re getting our products into production on time. Everybody does what it takes, burning the midnight oil if need be, to achieve common goals: bring new products to market on time and keep clients satisfied.”

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