

Case Study Sizing a Product Portfolio



Software Measurement Services Ltd.

Consultancy and training in the management of Information Systems.

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The Question

A major international software product developer was seeking to determine the size of their product portfolio. Without objective measurement data, it was difficult to get a view of the value of their product assets, the volume of change to be managed, and the quality of the products supplied to customers.

The Project

The organisation had a number of sites in different countries, developing software packages for treasury functions of large corporations. The company embarked on a global initiative using function point analysis to determine the size of their software asset base.

SMS's role

Rather than expend time and effort training their own staff in a technique which they would only use occasionally, the client brought in FPA measurement experts.

SMS, as one of the leading European suppliers of training and consultancy in the use of all variants of Functional Size Measurement, was pleased to provide skilled analysts as and when they were needed. This ensured a consistent and methodical approach to the measurement, producing reliable counts for the project office staff to work on.

We were also able to advise on the alignment and application of the software metrics to the business goals.

In fact, the MD used the FPA measurements as a sales tool to demonstrate to customers that the small number of defects reported in a product had only a tiny effect on a very small proportion of the delivered functionality.



The SMS Approach

SMS identified two stages to the work:

1. Establish a baseline size of identified software products – using IFPUG Function Point Analysis.
2. Track changes in the size of the portfolio over time. This was achieved by measuring the functional size of changes applied to the software products.

The SCOPE Function Point Counting software tool was used under license from Total Metrics to capture the functional requirements fulfilled by each product. As an independent consultancy, SMS is free to select appropriate software tools for the task rather than shaping a task to suit the tool.

The various product releases and changes were then sized individually. This enabled the client to understand the impact of changes and to prioritise and control development costs depending on their respective benefits.



SMS acts as a “Quantity Surveyor” for software developers.

“Quantity surveyors control construction costs by accurate measurement of the work required, the application of expert knowledge of costs and prices of work, labour, materials and plant required, an understanding of the implications of design decisions at an early stage to ensure that good value is obtained for the money to be expended.”

Definition of Quantity Surveyor, Wikipedia

The Benefits

Instigating a programme of measurement across their development sites gave SMS’s client a project productivity benchmark for each of the individual products. It gave an objective view of the performance of different sites and technologies which was a valuable input for optimising production.

The client gained an understanding of the value of their software asset base, and was able to quantify productivity, speed of development, and quality. This in turn improved predictability.

A baseline was established from which the client could implement demonstrable process improvement and quantitative project management.