



## ROI on Media Technology Consulting

I am a digital packrat. I admit it. Since the early nineties, I have saved drawings, files, proposals, worksheets – all the details of literally thousands of projects I have helped design and build since 1991.

Sometimes though, that comes in handy. Often clients call be about systems I build five, ten, or even more years ago, and quite often, I have the information they need on my big hard drive.

Being a digital packrat has another benefit too. It has allowed me to sometimes check the validity of impressions I feel are right, but otherwise might not have the facts to back up my impressions. I recently completed that exercise as I tried to determine whether consulting really does save money on a project, or not.

The ICIA, which is one of the big organizations for systems integrators, says consulting saves. In various studies, I have seen statistics that say consulting can save between \$3-\$7 for every dollar spent. That sounded about right, but I wanted to test the theory.

So I pulled out my digital closet and randomly pulled out several projects that covered broadcast type facilities, AV facilities and IT for Media plants. These were all projects where the client initially wanted to bring in a consultant, but ultimately decided not to use a consultant because it “cost too much.”

About half of these projects were university projects, the rest were churches, broadcasters and corporate projects. One was a government facility. My fees, had I gotten the projects, would have ranged roughly between \$25,000.00 and \$50,000.00.

In every case, in the actual projects, there were cost overruns from original expectations. Some of these were due to inaccurate budgeting that could have been avoided with an experience professional making sure every subsystem was covered in the budgeting process. Many of them came from misjudging timelines and logistics, thus causing delays in the systems being up and running. And many more came from construction and problems that would have been spotted and taken care of in the initial phases, but had to be added later, at a higher cost because no consultant had been in place.

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Cost over runs on the projects I ran through, ran between \$80,000.00 and half a million dollars. That's between \$3.5 and \$10 for every dollar that would have been spent, had a consultant been called in in the early phases. Dead on with the ICIA estimates. A little better than their estimates, actually.

What those estimates don't cover though, are the hidden costs. What does it cost in trying to scramble to find that extra money, or the meetings everyone attends trying to figure out what happened? Or the lost productivity because of delays or logistical nightmares? Those were numbers I could not quantify, but I well remember the frustration that those hidden costs caused. They are real costs.

Keep this in mind, because these kinds of savings only come to play if a consultant is brought in early, about the same time you are considering an architect. Delays after design work on a new facility had begun result in less and less savings. And more and more frustration in the project phase.

Naturally, I would like you to use us here at Quarry House if you need a consultant on your broadcast, AV or media centric IT project. But whether it's us, or someone else, keep these facts in mind as you wrestle with the decision on bringing in a consultant, or not.

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