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The Power of the PoC

So you've designed your shiny new IT strategy that has strategically aligned your IT to the business and contained within is possibly a list of technological solutions carefully selected to help deliver your business's strategic vision...

Nigel Robson
Executive Technology Consultant
Email nigel.robson@waterstons.com

Great!

However, the chances are, if your strategy is proposing to implement or deploy a new technology or software, there may be a significant investment of time and money associated with it.

It's natural to want to seek reassurance that your strategy will deliver what you expect it to and before you part with your money.

Our people take pride in not only knowing the technologies and solutions we use inside out but also understanding our customers too. We know that the technology we recommend will fit well into an organisation but to the customer, implementing a brand new system can be daunting so this is where the Proof of Concept comes in.

A Proof of Concept (PoC) isn't just related to IT projects but is used in a variety of sectors and industries, from engineering and business development to security and R&D. Even though they may work differently, their goal is still the same, to demonstrate the feasibility of a new solution or design.

One of the big advantages of implementing a PoC is the reduced initial expenditure required to implement a solution for testing. The majority of software providers on the market, such as Microsoft, VMware, Citrix, and many more offer free trials of their software to allow for users to test their products before committing to purchase. Some of these free trials can be up to 120 days in length giving a long period of time to perform in-depth testing. This is geared towards customers trying out the software before making a purchasing decision and determining if it will meet their requirements and expectations.

Rolling out a new solution to end-users always requires careful planning and testing. By implementing a PoC before the migration of live users, allows not only the solution to be tested but also the migration plan to be formulated. Technical and user issues can be resolved before go live when there is far less pressure on the IT staff to get things working. This is much harder to do when a solution has already gone live and problems can lead to multiple issues, delays, and worst of all, end users losing confidence in the new solution.

End-user buy-in is key to any successful project rollout. Without this, the task of migrating to a new system will be even tougher to complete. We've found that users who are involved in a PoC can provide feedback on its performance and suggest improvements. As they are more involved in the process, they will take a greater interest in the new solution leading to increased user adoption and this will in the end help ensure a successful project deployment.

One of our customers was looking into deploying Microsoft's Remote Desktop Services to their end-users. This was due to an aging desktop estate. Instead of investing in desktop machines for each user, this customer wanted to investigate whether using older hardware or thin clients to access internal IT resources was possible. The customer wanted answers to questions such as:

- Will our existing hardware perform well with RDS? (Technically we knew this would work but real life can give different results!)
- Will our in-house applications work with RDS?
- How will users find the new working environment?
- Will the existing server hardware be able to handle implementing RDS for all users?

Instead of deploying RDS in a production environment, a PoC was suggested to test the feasibility of RDS.

By the end of the PoC, the above questions were answered and any technical issues were resolved. A subset of users were migrated to RDS for a number of weeks and asked to provide feedback. The client deemed RDS to be a successful fit for their organisation. They are now confident to implement this solution and commit to the investment. Without a PoC first, this decision may have been more difficult to arrive at with the same level of confidence.

A PoC can be a powerful tool for any organisation to determine the feasibility of a new product or proposed solution. Running a PoC rather than a full deployment can reduce costs and raise the quality of the end solution. It has the ability to minimise the risk of implementing a new system as potential issues can be found and remediated before any significant expenditure or resource is committed. Above all, a PoC can give confidence to both the management and end-users that any new proposed solution will be a good fit for the organisation to help reach its strategic ambitions.