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**Innovation and Collaboration Impact Study**

**Interview Transcript**

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START AUDIO

Interviewer: Can I switch on the recorder?

Peter Adam: That’s fine

Interviewer: So, the first question is just a general one so we’ve got it on the recording can you just describe your current role in the company

Peter Adam: I’m the executive vice president for the company

Interviewer: Okay, so from your first-hand experience of the AimHi project what was the aim of the project when it initially started?

Peter Adam: To move some of our existing products onto the cloud to make it easier to deploy and demo with clients and that kind of thing

Interviewer: Where did the project idea originate from?

Peter Adam: So, we did the Horizon cloud project with umm, a University and another University originally.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: And that was kind of a tester about whether we could support our products on the cloud.

Interviewer: Right, as the MD were you directly involved in the development or was it something you just let them get on with*.*

Peter Adam: No, I was involved in the development as well.

Interviewer: Right, and how were you involved?

Peter Adam: I was the chairperson for the KTP, urm from the company side, kind of the sponsor

Interviewer: Righty, what did the project achieve then?

Peter Adam: So, we developed a product called AimHi, which is a kinda cloud based measurement tool for clients on their asset performance and asset integrity.

Interviewer: Right, did it change from its original aim?

Peter Adam: Yes, I would say it did, I would say that we kinda got scared by the person provided by Salford University I think. You know they obviously had preferences as what they wanted to work on and also, we were steered by a client who wanted to be an early adopter as well so we ended up modifying it to suit their needs as we saw it as a way of kinda taking it market quite quickly then

Interviewer: Right so my next question was so from you’re your perspective did you see any challenges, and I think what you have already said might have encompassed one or two….?

Peter Adam: Uhm

Interviewer: So, what were the main lessons you learned from the experience?

Peter Adam: I would say going forward having much more stricter control on scope and sticking to the original scope. I think its double edged because you have to listen to what clients want and you have to deliver a product to market that er is commercially viable and, and people will be excited about. But equally if you go down particular person or peoples wants or needs you may not be meeting the goals of the project, bringing something to market that’s different as well because people tend to revert back to, what they want to do. So, um I think er, I think. We are working on another KTP project at the moment and I would say with that we want to try and be more focused on achieving our goals from the project scope and not get um, distracted away from that by either the associate provided wanting to do something different.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: Um, because it might be easier or it might be interesting for them or a client that is potentially interested creating needs and wants that might again distract us again from meeting our end goal.

Interviewer: So, it is keeping more, on your sort of, on the aims of your company rather than getting side tracked by one or two other ideas that are happening around and associated with it?

Peter Adam: Yep, yep I think so, I think the problem with it is that you have so many stakeholders potentially getting involved, that their level of influence can then shape, especially in a long term project, can shape the result.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: Because you can’t be on it all the time, and er, going forward with these types of projects I think we will be much stricter on that.

Interviewer: So, before the AimHi was introduced how did Company A create software products?

Peter Adam: We had two methodologies, we would out-source it to a software company or we would do it internally. But the internal ones were much more just sort of access databases and weren’t really products that we could take to market.

Interviewer: So, you did have a small ability to do in-house software um… things, sorry that’s not the best word.

Peter Adam: Yes, but it was fairly limited and I would say it was more on a project basis specific problem solving for one-off projects which you could then probably turn into products but… um we probably have more opportunity to develop products than we have time to do it.

Interviewer: *Yes*

Peter Adam: Because we are consultants

Interviewer: Yes, so really, one of the biggest changes was time and maybe the direction of the company, that you faced with those arrangements by bring the software in-house.

Peter Adam: Well yer, it was all operational stuff really

Interviewer: *Yes*

Peter Adam: Rather than R&D or development people previously, so.

Interviewer: Okay, did out-sourcing and having a small software department, did that bring any benefits to the company?

Peter Adam: I think it was better in one respect, you know you would have a clear deliverable and scope and then it would happen faster.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: Because that company would want to make money the commercial. I think with doing internal R&D or with the University for example there isn’t that commercial drive and it’s kinda… It’s definitely a lot slower, its more researched based.

Interviewer: Mm

Peter Adam: Um, so I think, you know for some developments, you’d say well let’s just develop it with an external company because we are going to get it done quicker, it um feels like there isn’t the sense of urgency with people doing it internally or as part of university for example.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: Um, maybe that’s quite specific to the people involved, though I think that’s more down to who you have and their back ground.

Interviewer: I think this next question was bringing the development in house and this has possibly been already covered a little bit, but the question was what influenced the decision to bring um more software development in house?........Was there a particular driver?

Peter Adam: Um…..The software company we used to use had replaced a lot of people and there was no legacy knowledge of our products that we developed with them, so I think, you know, we were worried about the fact that as we…….as that company changed we were kind of forgotten about and that put our products that we had developed in a risk erm…….I think we felt we wanted more ownership of that.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: Um, I think we also felt that it might be more cost effective, but its only cost effective if people are good finisher completers, they actually get to the end and, the problem is that if you’ve got people that are in R&D they want to just develop forever, the, there doesn’t seem to be an end goal at times, so that, that is a commercial side for me which is a frustration.

Interviewer: So yes, absolutely. So, a lot of it was, was control and quite a few other factors as well. Did any other divisions within the company provide support or influence to bring it in-house?

Peter Adam: No, no, it was all to do with our part of the business erm…. and really seeing the opportunity with getting funding as well

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: To help offset the cost of it.

Interviewer: Right absolutely, yes, right again the next question we have sort of touched upon it already, it was can you describe your experience of bring the software process of bringing the software process into Company A.

Peter Adam: Sorry can you say that again

Interviewer: Yes, can you just describe the process of bringing the software process into company A, what sort of things had to be change to being it in?

Peter Adam: ……..Erm……… really maybe wrongly we didn’t change too much to be honest with you, we have changed as a result of it.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: But when it came in we didn’t change too much, we still had the same organisational structure and so it’s like er.. we have had to look at the marketing side more as well, to say how are we going to say okay how are we going to do better product launches.

Interviewer: Right yes

Peter Adam: So, we actually get these products in to market and off the ground……….um yes, part of it is that erm, that business change happening we have also had to understand that we have to carve out time, for my time and one of my colleague’s time to manage somebody in the business specifically around R&D so.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: So, I guess it created a different business function that we didn’t have which was the kinda, dedicated ringfenced R&D people so there is now 3 of them currently, 2 are employed by Company A and one is an associate on a new KTP.

Interviewer: Right. So, right from your role what benefits have you observed with the internal software development capability?

Peter Adam: Erm… I think the benefit was that we worked in partnership with our client, I also think that the cloud computing side in terms of deployment is much better as well.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: But, I also see negatives to it as well, in terms of what we ended up with as the end product. We er, we kinda lost track as we went along in both in terms of the associate, and erm… being led by our client as well where we felt that would give us er, er the opportunity to sort of get into the market early and start the launch with the client onboard, so I think we kinda, I blame myself for that part of it but I would say on the associate side of it the associate at times would er, take an easier path erm when it came to learning the technical part of our business, I would say that the weakness there.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: Was the associate didn’t want to learn the technical part of our business to turn that into the software, erm they kinda at times would take the easier option and then focus more on the more technical challenge of multi-tenancy hierarchy and cloud based computing and all the things which were their comfort.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: Were a factor if you like, so I would say that was kinda like big lessons learned.

Interviewer: So sometimes it was the er, slightly more academic side coming through as opposed to the business side pushing through.

Peter Adam: May be not academic, but I would say more the technical challenge of the cloud computing rather than the technical challenge of the algorithms that we use for reliability analysis for example.

Interviewer: Right, okay.

Peter Adam: They kinda wanted very much spoon fed, the associate wanted kinda spoon fed, anything that became a little bit……um more complex would be shifted away from, um so I feel they didn’t really get a full understanding of, of, of what we do in terms of reliability analysis for example.

Interviewer: Right okay, did you find that by developing it yourselves that it gave you a slightly better insight into your customer or interaction with your customers…………or is your customer base quite fixed so it didn’t really give any advantage in that way.

Peter Adam: Well I’m hoping in the future er when we do take it to market that we will……….urm………..that we will be able to sell it to a wider audience than before. I mean one of the concepts around this was that we would be able to give it clients and they just use it themselves.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: Taking out some of the cost of using consultants for ourselves and the client so it would take it to a………er lower price point for clients who are say in manufacturing where the margins may be lower for example.

Interviewer: So, okay so has actually developing it or bring the development in-house has it started to change the company strategy or focus?........or is it one of those things which is ongoing….

Peter Adam: It has, no it has changed the company focus, so we have done more internal development since then, as I say there is now 3 people

Interviewer: *Yes*

Peter Adam: On the R&D team where we had kinda zero before that er so, we’ve scaled up. Some of that is to continue supporting the product and to take it to the product launch and some of that is for new developments as well.

Interviewer: Do you feel that has improved the business competitiveness?

Peter Adam: Not yet because you know we haven’t got anything out to market yet, so I feel the question still remains on that but er ultimately it will but it feels like a long time in coming at the moment.

Interviewer: Yes, when is it being launched?

Peter Adam: We are trying to launch just now, but um as I say there are a couple of bits of functionality that we are getting feedback that the tool needs, otherwise it might impact the launch er……..so….. we have consultants on our team who are ex- consultants from other companies and employees of clients are giving us feedback that they feel that there needs to be more development on the tool which feel like its never ending and that, that, so I’ve kinda said that, well we have to launch even if it is at a heavily discounted price at this stage and people get wee kind of add on’s as we move forward so.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: So, we can just sort of push forward with it otherwise we’ll never…get it to the market.

Interviewer: I was talking to Natalie about it and she said she’d been doing quite a lot of user experience with people and then they were getting a lot of feedback that was going into it, so she had an interesting take on what was happening. Um so you obviously have an approach to the R&D, can you describe that at the moment?

Peter Adam: The current R&D you mean

Interviewer: Yes, the current, yes just your approach to what you are doing with the Research and Development.

Peter Adam: Um so we have 2 streams really, we have completely new ideas and concepts so that’s like the new KTP that we are doing now on change management, but then we have operational R&D development, which are more to do with upgrading tools that we have or try to improve on them

Interviewer: *Right*

Peter Adam: So there’s kinda, 2 streams running at the moment.

Interviewer: Can you see that changing with the additional software development that is happening?

Peter Adam: Yes, it already is so we have one of the past associates working for us now, the first KTP, and he is now working on a materials management software.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: For web deployment, but hopefully that will be a success but we’ve kinda been putting that off for years, developing that but now we are able to.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: And then the other area is around a maintenance build tool but again we probably should have done a couple of years ago but are now building a more suitable tool. So, we kinda had tools that worked in excel or access that weren’t fit for purpose so I think we are trying to get our house in order in terms of having the software for either internal use or for sales.

Interviewer: Right, how do you decide on the research and development, is that one person or is it just like you are saying, you’ve got things that have come to a head and you think you’ve got to change this?

Peter Adam: I think we probably let things come to a head, because we have this kinda fear that R&D development seems to go on for ever.

Interviewer: Yes

Peter Adam: And er, I think that’s why we put it off.

Interviewer: Right, why did you opt for a KTP?

Peter Adam: I felt it was a good way to get funding, so we were looking for funding at the time and the KTP seemed one of the best ways to do that and still be able to capitalise against the project from a financial stand point.

Interviewer: Had you spoken to other companies that had done similar or had you got existing relationships with the university?

Peter Adam: We had existing relationships with the university so that was another reason that we felt that that was a strong way forward.

Interviewer: And has the academic partnership brought any other benefits or maybe dis-benefits?

Peter Adam: I think one thing I would say is that the University have a different, academic drive than obviously than, than the commercial drive so sometimes that can be at odds, but I think we managed the relationship well from the university side, the senior person there did a good job in trying to deliver on both, I would say and we have tried to be accommodating to the academic needs of the project as well.

Interviewer: Okay, does the KTP partnership influence the R&D partnership or are they sort of separate?

Peter Adam: Really, the KTP part of it they just really want to make sure that the money is being spent well so they are just really making sure both parties are both happy and driving towards an end product.

Interviewer: Okay, if there’s one thing you could fix about the innovation or the process what would it be?

Peter Adam: Um, I think there needs to be maybe a prioritisation around the commercial delivery side earlier and then the academic piece come in, in the latter part of the project and kinda have that focus on delivery earlier. I think that would probably help because that would help the company and it would make sure that the time for the academic work was clearly laid out as well.

Interviewer: Yes

Peter Adam: And it could be more the result of the project.

Interviewer: Right, right um,

Peter Adam: You know the one thing I would say is you know for us, a three year KTP is, is I probably wouldn’t want to do another 3 year KTP again because it is just too long

Interviewer: Yes

Peter Adam: Especially when you are waiting for the end result, a lot of the drive and the motivation for it is in the early phases and then kinda it, it kinda stifles it a little bit when it takes so long in delivery. So I would probably be more focused on shorter turn around KTP, like 2 and 1 year ones.

Interviewer: Right, right that’s an interesting idea that, that the whole process is just a little bit, it’s just too long for a commercial product and therefore the viability and also some of the ideas, particularly with technology are actually outdated by the time.

Peter Adam: Yep

Interviewer: By the time you’ve been able to implement them

Peter Adam: That’s right

Interviewer: And things have moved forward. With the dashboards that you put in, have the dashboards brought the speed and the, the intelligence that you wanted and had hoped for?

Peter Adam: …………um say that again sorry

Interviewer: It was the dashboards that you brought in, the technology with the dashboards, have they brought the um speed and intelligence that you were looking for?

Peter Adam: Umm………partly

Interviewer: Partly

Peter Adam: Partly, I would say it’s a partial delivery, so I think some of the challenges that we wanted to build in didn’t get done and um, and those were things like um, like linkage to SAP er for example.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: And kinda also the decision tree matrix that we wanted to build in so that the tool could be more intelligent, that didn’t get built in and also some of the reliability analysis didn’t get built in so I would say we got part of the way there…….um…….

Interviewer: Okay, what of the technologies that have been brought in do you think have had the biggest change, is it the cloud deployment or…?

Peter Adam: Yes, I mean the cloud deployment is where the focus lay and I think, I think that is why we ended up sacrificing other things because the focus was on that cloud deployment and what software to use and that kinda stuff.

Interviewer: Right, right, I believe the development process they brought in was an Agile one, has um….. what was my question……has that been an effective way of doing it, so where you deliver a bit and then go to the client and deliver a bit, or has it just actually made it longer?

Peter Adam: It has made it longer.

Interviewer: Has this process effected any other business areas you manage?........so like in the project management area?

Peter Adam: I would say for er….Yes so we are adopting Agile when it comes to other new developments.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: That are being internally built

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: On the R&D side

Interviewer: Right, I think that’s me come more or less to the end of my questions, um

Peter Adam: Okay

Interviewer: So, I suppose it is just really, is there anything else that you think is relevant that you think I have missed, so this has been about the innovation and collaboration study and the impact.

Peter Adam: I think probably, I’ve probably been a bit negative if I’m thinking about what I’ve said now, and I think it has changed the business I think we are much more ….. we’ve developed an R&D focus now as a business.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: And I think we need some patience as a business to see that through and get the benefit of that and that’s where the commercial side I think is sometimes at odds with the development side

Interviewer: Mm

Peter Adam: I think your trying to get the product to market, get revenue from it and it is er………. hard to manage that I think and adopt that philosophy in the business is a hard transition.

Interviewer: Yes

Peter Adam: Umm, and you need to have plenty of revenue for that as well to make sure you can afford it.

Interviewer: Would you have gone down the software development route if you had just gone, like…. right let’s just get some software developers in or would that just not have been an option?

Peter Adam: I think we would have outsourced for it again with a software company.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: If we were doing that.

Interviewer: And do you, sorry go on

Peter Adam: I wouldn’t have taken on the internal R&D people that we have without the knowledge of what we have gone through with the KTP, because I don’t think I would have felt confident.

Interviewer: Right

Peter Adam: To do that, so I think the business is more confident now to approach R&D as genuine R&D where as before .. um we would be er, you know we would be looking to that externally because we wouldn’t have confidence in our team because they were more operational analysts and er, not really programmers in the sense of development and product optimisation so we probably had our fingers burnt a couple of times with that.

Interviewer: So, it has actually given you quite a good spring board then into a slightly different way and may be a way developing the company that maybe would not have happened if you hadn’t had the experience?

Peter Adam: Yes, yes definitely, I think we are……. more……..I think we are still learning

Interviewer: Yes

Peter Adam: But I think we are more confident now to do this ourselves and um…….er……. manage people who are within the R&D environment, maybe we are learning and we are further up the learning curve now.

Interviewer: Right, absolutely and actually the software development side of it you have had more experience in dealing with these projects*.*

Peter Adam: Mm

Interviewer: And what are the advantages and what the pitfalls are.

Peter Adam: Yes

Interviewer: Okay, what else have we got, no, so I think that is more or less me, so if there is anything else?

Peter Adam: Okay

Interviewer: I think unless there is anything else you would like to say.. umm

Peter Adam: No that’s fine

Interviewer: So, I just want to really thank you very much for your time, just the last little bit just for the record just because I need to get this for t So, the first question is just a general one so we’ve got it on the recording at the end of the tape, and obviously this will be kept confidential, can you just say your name.

Peter Adam: Peter Adam

Interviewer: Your job title.

Peter Adam: Executive vice president for Asset Integrity Management and Company A

Interviewer: And how long have you been working with the current company

Peter Adam: Err…….14 years

Interviewer: And how long have you been in the industry

Peter Adam: Nearly 20 years

Interviewer: That’s Brilliant. Thank you so much for your time, it’s really kind of you and I hope all goes well.