

From: Cummings Bob
To: LAWSON CAROLYN
Subject: External Feedback on HIX IT Project
Date: Wednesday, March 28, 2012 12:44:17 PM
Importance: High
Sensitivity: Confidential

I got a call from a professional colleague (who I've known for years and have great confidence in). He told me that he had lunch this past week or so with 5-6 contractors on the IT side of HIX. He didn't want to mention any of their names, but he did mention that he'd love to recruit one or more of them for work that he is doing elsewhere.

According to him, they were very concerned about a number of things and several of them were considering leaving the IT project. He wanted to make sure that I was aware of the situation. The "hearsay" that I received included:

1. They (the contractors) felt that the IT effort was having some major problems due to poor requirements and use cases. They were very frustrated.
2. Several had major problems with Pete Mallord and felt that he didn't know what he was doing. Lack of experience seemed to be in play here.
3. Several had major problems with Rus Hargrave and felt that he was winging it and didn't know what he was doing. Trust was low here.
4. They felt that the program side of HIX was doing little to provide the foundational materials needed by the IT "side" of HIX.
5. Several of them were discussing leaving the HIX IT effort to go work on a similar project up in Washington state.
6. They felt that the QA report from Maximus was not addressing many of the key issues facing both the IT and program "sides" of HIX.

This highly qualified QA individual has reviewed the Maximus QA report (which he got from one or more of these employees), and agrees that if the missing issues are indeed a problem, that the QA report does not say a word about them (or only lightly addresses them). He was letting me know that there appeared to be a disconnect between reality and what Maximus was bringing up.

As I said, this is hearsay, but I want you to know that I was not impressed with all the QA work on MMIS, OR-Kids, and several other DHS efforts. Many of my concerns related to HIX are clearly evident to me (from a distance), yet Maximus has not chosen to include them in their quarterly report (which isn't frequent enough for me – I prefer monthly performance QA reports with quarterly major risk assessment reports). That is what another QA vendor does on another large IT Project and I find it very helpful in providing timely risk and performance tracking.

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I have spoken to Maximus regarding some of this and they assure me that they are aware of the problems (which prompted me to ask why they are not including them in their reports – their response didn't satisfy me). We may have some "dog worming" going on with your QA vendor (we'll need to watch very closely). If I'm not mistaken, I think that the same QA staff did the oversight on OR-Kids, and they missed a lot. Either way, they need to raise their game and the

frequency and timing of their reporting. They also need to expand the scope of their work to cover both the business and IT (assuming that DAS approves).

I don't think your contractors will be willing to share their concerns directly with us. That said, I think you need to open your IT project team up to an anonymous feedback "survey" to see if they would be willing to share their concerns that way. I wouldn't even suggest this except that the individual I talked with has worked with me for 20+ years, is a straight shooter, knows his way around a project, and doesn't bring things up unless there is a real problem. He knows the difference between "griping" (where the employee doesn't want anything done – just someone to feel his/her pain) and "gripping" where the employee sees no way out of the situation other than to leave.

I think that the "mis-matched" teething that is going on between the IT project and the program related to requirements is a major source of this frustration, but it also sounds like there is a lack of confidence in the leadership (one is a marketer with a lot of "happy talk" – tell folks what they want to hear, and the other means well, but really isn't all that experienced on projects of this size and complexity). There seemed to be some basic distrust (or at least lack of confidence) in both Rus and Pete (I could see how this might happen given my experience in working with both of them).

I'll leave it to you to determine what, if anything, to do on all of this, but the fact that contractors may be out looking tells you that they think that there are some serious issues.

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