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Business Solution Audit

Sopheon
Product Life-Cycle Management
PLMV002 - April 2011

Strengths

- ☑ Excellent product development process management capabilities.
- ☑ Strategic roadmapping to pull relevant functions together.
- ☑ Very experienced supplier with deep domain experience.
- ☑ Broad range of support services

Weaknesses

- ☒ The company uses some fairly arcane jargon. Simple language might be more effective.

Advisory

It's an often stated truism that the only things that really matter in business are customer preference for your products and services and participation in growing markets. Apple plays those cards to perfection. Despite these fairly obvious facts it is always surprising how little systems support is given to activities that leverage these dynamics. Product lifecycle management systems are crucial if a firm is to compete effectively with business winning products. The all too common scenario is myopic focus on internal efficiency improvements while customers and markets drift away.

Sopheon addresses the need to deliver market leading products and services holistically and with intelligence. We say 'with intelligence' because the development of market winning product is a combination of process and creativity – too much of either ingredient and innovation will die (as evidenced by 3M's abandonment of Six Sigma in the research function).

Accolade is Sopheon's product lifecycle management system providing a solution for the process side of the equation with support for a variety of product development methodologies, and the necessary tools to measure product innovation performance. Various modules can be added to address issues such as portfolio management, idea management and resource planning.

Strategic product roadmapping is addressed by Accolade Vision Strategist and in our opinion this is perhaps the most valuable tool that Sopheon provides. It potentially brings together competitive intelligence, marketing and product development so that new product can always be aligned with the moves of competitors and with the market.

It really doesn't matter what sector a business operates in, Sopheon solutions provide an opportunity for much greater product development efficiency and accuracy.

What it Does

The Accolade Product Lifecycle Management solution provides a framework to control and measure the product development process. This doesn't of course mean that market leading product creation is more assured, it simply means that the process can become more efficient. Project visibility is

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increased and centralisation of product data reduces the opportunity for ambiguity and duplication of effort. Support is provided for a variety of product development methodologies including Stage-Gate, PACE, DoD 5000 and DFSS.

Various modules can be added to Accolade PLM. These include portfolio management for resource prioritisation, idea management which supports submission of new ideas, resource planning to display and plan resource utilisation, document routing for approval, and accelerators that add advanced functionality to Sopheon's core products.

Vision Strategist is an exciting solution. We don't say this very often, but it has the potential to unite the things that *really* matter within an organisation – marketing, competitive intelligence and product development. It provides an opportunity to bring together factors which should affect product development strategy such as market trends, economic factors, competitor moves, internal resources and anything else that might influence product development decisions.

The company also provides specific Accolade solutions in clinical trials and protocol management (in healthcare) and various support and consulting services.

What's Different

While Accolade Product Lifecycle Management does provide an excellent solution, it is the Accolade Vision Strategist that potentially has most to offer an organisation in our opinion. It should be said however that getting various stovepiped functions to share has always been problematical. To this end Vision Strategist should receive the highest level of sponsorship within the organisation for its use to be effective.

About Sopheon

Sopheon is headquartered in the UK and also has offices in the Netherlands and USA. The company is listed on the London Stock Exchange (LSE:SPE) and has annual revenues of around £10 million. Revenues are growing (20% YoY even in these difficult times) and new customers account for a significant part of this. Customers include BAE Systems, Electrolux and Corning.

http://www.sopheon.com