

Mining for SAS gold?

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Abstract:

Finding SAS gold or an ingenious SAS software application is important both to the private and public sector. This presentation will divulge how to identify, evaluate and program potential SAS gold mine applications.

Locating those ingenious SAS applications can be difficult because its hard to know where to look. This paper will begin by helping you locate those golden SAS opportunities by revealing where the most SAS valuable applications are.

To make sure an application is worth doing and not fool's gold, several techniques of evaluate the project will be unfurled in the presentation.

And finally to help you mine that gold once you found it, several programming tricks of the trade will be describe in the presentation.

Biography:

Tom Mannigel President of Multitex Software a software company that specializes in SAS based information systems. Tom has twenty years of program development experience and 15 years of SAS experience.

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Where to look for SAS Gold.

Finding the real valuable of SAS software is something that is important to us all. For you as a SAS technologist its important for your career, the more value you add to your company/agency the better you will do in your career. To me its important to add as much value to my clients as possible that's why I have studied and continue to study the subject of software value. Software is one of the best investments a company/agency can make. Let's look at places where SAS software gold can be found.

Direct Savings

Normally when you a looking for software gold, the first thing you would consider is direct savings via a decrease in labor cost. Your immediately faced with the one of the great dilemmas in software systems. Whose labor are you saving and if you save to much labor whose going to be out of a job? I think it is ironic that the people who have the most to loss for a new software system also have the most to contribute to its success. What are the chances of a project software succeeding if its justification is based on replacing the people that have the knowledge to make it work. But there is hope. Don't throw your pick and shovel away just yet.

Up-leveling.

One way to overcome this dilemma is to look for project that do what I call "up-leveling". Most software systems support knowledge workers who provide knowledge and information to others. The goal of a up leveling project is to transfer the knowledge of one knowledge worker to another at a different level. A good example of "up-leveling" is a project I did where a staff member was require to respond to customer quality control questions using SAS QC. We automated that procedure so that the secretary could respond to the inquires. This was a great project because the secretary job's was now more valuable and the staff member could move on to more meanful work. And the project cost could be easily justified by take the value of the differences in their salaries times the time to do the reports plus the time saved in automating the reports.

Another example of direct labor savings is to eliminate multiple data entry of the same data. Data entry is a bad enough job without having to do twice.

Where to look for SAS Gold(cont.)

Material savings:

Another way to determine the value of a project is by calculating the direct material savings. Again the problem with software systems is that there is little direct material . Other than paper for printout or CPU time. I have replace a few "tree killer reports" with executive summary that could almost be justified on paper cost but those are raw and CPU time is getting cheaper by the microsecond.. However there are indirect material savings that should be counted as part of the value of a project. Another example comes to mind where we automated an operating cost system that got operating cost to the field personnel two weeks sooner. As a result they were able to monitor and cut cost of the materials they used in this case oil field supplies and equipment. For this software projects we did not track the savings. Typically most software projects are justified at the start and no one really bothers to track how well they really do. Big mistake. There is great value in the tracking process. I recommend that some means of tracking the value of a software project be implement in all your software systems. How else are you going to know if you strike gold .

Increased productivity. Here's another real toughy to measure. What is "increased productivity" when your main product is information and knowledge. More information is not necessarily better information. One good report can save millions. A thousand of pages of unused reports are worthless.

"Knowledge Transfer"

Again another example to the rescue. In this example we did what I call "knowledge transfer" The system created financial reports for operations staff. The system was devised by a business analyst to answer many of the question operations people had about how well there operations were doing financially on a month to month basis. They could get the information they need from the reports rather than calling the analyst. The new system freed the financial analyst time for more detailed analysis and got information to the people who could use it sooner. I am sure the system saved millions but again no tracking mechanism was installed.

Competitive Advantage.

This is the real fool's gold of software system. If you use software system to beat the competition. The best you can hope for is a slight advantage until they find out about it.

Increased revenue or increased customer service.

Our hunt for SAS gold does not get any easier. Most knowledge workers are so far from the bottom line or in the government where there is no bottom line; that the concept of increasing revenue may have no meaning to them. Yet ultimately every Software project must have some effect on the bottom line or do a better service within the budget or soon there will be no more projects. Again I think the problem is no one has taken the trouble to track the improved revenue or the value of better services. This field is a real gold mine. You can only cut cost or cut the budget so much. Cutting cost is like cutting body parts to loss weight. On the other hand there is no limit to how much you can increase new revenue because of a new system and no limit to how many more people you can help because of better government services.

Conclusion

You now have some ideas of where to look of SAS Gold . Go for it.

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