



AIME Success Story: Infonium Inc.

Company Profile:

Developer of accountability reporting software - specializing in hospital accountability reporting and analysis

- **Country of Ownership:** Canada
- **Year Established:** 1999
- **Exporting:** Yes
- **Primary Industry (NAICS):** 511210 – Software Publisher
- **Primary Business Activity:** Manufacturer / Processor / Producer
- **Products:** Healthcare software to streamline business processes between healthcare organizations
- **Total Sales (\$CDN):** \$500,000 - \$750,000
- **Number of Employees:** 8-10
- **Industries Served:** Healthcare Organizations
- **Geographic Markets:** Ontario
- **Actively Pursuing:** Rest of Canada
- **In Planning:** USA

Background

Infonium develops application software for the Canadian healthcare industry to streamline processes between healthcare organizations. The software dramatically improves accountability reporting in the healthcare system, as well as administrative efficiency within hospitals. The company was founded in 1999 by Jay Lawrence and operates out of Ottawa, Ontario. Jay recognized that healthcare system requirements were always evolving and relied on solutions that addressed current needs as well as being adaptable to changing future requirements. Infonium's software enables healthcare transformation and it is designed to integrate seamlessly with existing processes.

Over the past 10 years the company has grown from a one-man organization, through the gradual addition of software developers and engineers, to its current size of eight full-time employees. The company has been successful in introducing software applications that do not interfere with the IT systems running within healthcare organization, but in fact it sits alongside those systems, acting as a reporting tool to the Health System Administrators and allowing them to make more informed decisions.

By 2008 Infonium had commercialized two products and was focusing on the development of others that were designed to meet the needs of a market that was desperately looking for ways of streamlining their service while not putting patients at risk.

In the fall of 2008, in an effort to dramatically improve his company's ability to get products to market faster, Jay did some analysis on the effectiveness of how his development team was functioning. What he found was disturbing.

In an average day, Jay, who should have been focused on initiatives that would take the business to the next level, was interrupted as many as six times to deal with routine questions and problems that his staff should have been able to work through on their own. The combined loss of productivity was so significant that Jay realized that if the development processes were not improved quickly, Infonium had no hope of moving beyond its current level. In fact the likelihood was the company would regress.

Behavioural Change

Berteig Consulting is a Toronto area consulting firm specializing in helping organizations and people succeed with *Agile Work* methods, a leadership philosophy that encourages teamwork, self-organization and accountability through a set of engineering best practices that allow for rapid delivery of high-quality software, and a business approach that aligns development with customer needs and company goals.

Throughout this challenging time at Infonium, Mishkin Berteig, president of Berteig Consulting, had been discussing a specific approach to address Infonium's development problems with Jay. Berteig's recommendation was that Infonium work with Berteig to create a behavioural change of attitude among the employees at Infonium.

While Jay recognized that this was exactly what his company needed to move Infonium from a consultancy to a legitimate product manufacturing company, the costs of training the staff were out of the question for a company of this size.

Yves Landry Foundation Introduces AIME

In response to the dramatically deteriorating conditions for manufacturers in Ontario, the Yves Landry Foundation (YLF) launched the AIME initiative (Achieving Innovation and Manufacturing Excellence) in the fall of 2008. AIME was developed by YLF and funded by the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development to support all manufacturers in Ontario who were facing the kinds of challenges for employee training that Infonium was facing.

Information on the AIME program came to Jay through Infonium's National Research Council – IRAP advisor. Jay heard back from YLF two weeks after submitting the preliminary application that Infonium qualified for a \$35,000 grant that would cover the cost of the Berteig training. Over the summer of 2009 Infonium underwent 16 days of training with Berteig, which was comprised of intensive exercises and mentorship development. The experience has added a whole new discipline to the company's software engineering and development process.

The Difference of Night and Day

"The difference in employee behaviour was noticeable immediately," says Jay. "Communication improved, there were more breakout sessions among the employees and manager intervention dropped practically to zero. The employees are finding that in 90% of the cases they can find the answer to problems among themselves. The staff feels empowered and is much happier. There is generally a lighter feel around the office.

The biggest change however is our confidence as a company to take on larger, more complex projects. I feel that we now have a serious chance at making a major win, which for us could double our business. I think the AIME program has made the difference between failure and success for Infonium".

For more information about the YLF or AIME, contact:

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