



SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

Working on Projects Remotely

Collaborate 2011

Cathye Pendley

VlamiS Software Solutions

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<http://www.vlamiS.com>



Vlamis Software Solutions, Inc.

- Founded in 1992 in Kansas City, Missouri
- Oracle Partner and reseller since 1995
- Developed more than 200 Oracle BI systems
- Specializes in ORACLE-based:
 - Data Warehousing
 - Business Intelligence
 - Data Transformation (ETL)
 - Web development and portals
- Delivers
 - Design and integrated BI and DW solutions
 - Training and mentoring
- Exclusive supplier world-wide for Windows-based
- Oracle BIC2G BI & EPM VMs
- Expert presenter at major Oracle conferences
- www.vlamis.com (blog, papers, newsletters, services)



Vlami Collaborate Presentations

Presenter	Session	Time	Title
Chris Claterbos	ODTUG Soup to Nuts	Sun 1:00-6:00	Accelerate your Data Warehouse with Oracle OBIEE, OLAP, and Essbase
Chris Claterbos	BIWA Bootcamp	Mon 9:15-10:15	New Features of OBIEE11g - Using it in the Real World
Dan Vlami	IOUG	Mon 1:15-2:15	Fast Complex Analysis with Oracle OLAP
Tim Vlami	BIWA Bootcamp	Tues 10:30-11:30	Visualizing Data Using Maps in OBI 11g
Chris Claterbos	Hands On Lab	Wed 8:00-9:00	The New OBIEE 11g - A Quick Start Guide part 1
Chris Claterbos	Hands On Lab	Wed 9:15-10:15	The New OBIEE 11g - A Quick Start Guide part 2
Dan Vlami	IOUG	Wed 9:15-10:15	Case Study on OBIEE 11g on JD Edwards Data
Cathye Pendley	IOUG	Wed 2:15-3:15	Working on Projects Remotely



Who Am I?

Cathye Pendley, Senior Consultant

Oracle / Express Consulting 1993 - 2002

- Implement OLAP projects
- Manage project teams
- Manage Dallas Business Intelligence Group

Corporate IT Director 2002 - 2004

Senior Consultant for Vlami Software since 2004



Agenda

- Overview and Background
- Benefits for Employee / Consultant
- Benefits for Companies
- Tools and Techniques
- Handling Obstacles
- Clients Viewpoint
- Summary



Background and Overview

- 1993 - Began Consulting Career
 - IRI / Oracle
 - Shell Consulting Services
 - Pinnacle/Thinkfast Consulting
 - Braun Consulting
- 2002 – Left consulting and became a Corporate IT director for a better work/life balance
- 2004 – Not satisfied with long commute, started looking for something closer to home
- Oct. 2004 - VlamiS Software offered me a consulting position working remotely



Background and Overview

VlamiS Career: The Early Years

- Lived in Dallas
- VlamiS home office is in Kansas City
- Hired to work fulltime for a client in Philadelphia
 - 4 year project
 - Traveled to Philadelphia 5 times
 - a total of 10 days
 - Traveled Kansas City 3 times
 - a total of 9 days
 - Attended conferences and training classes

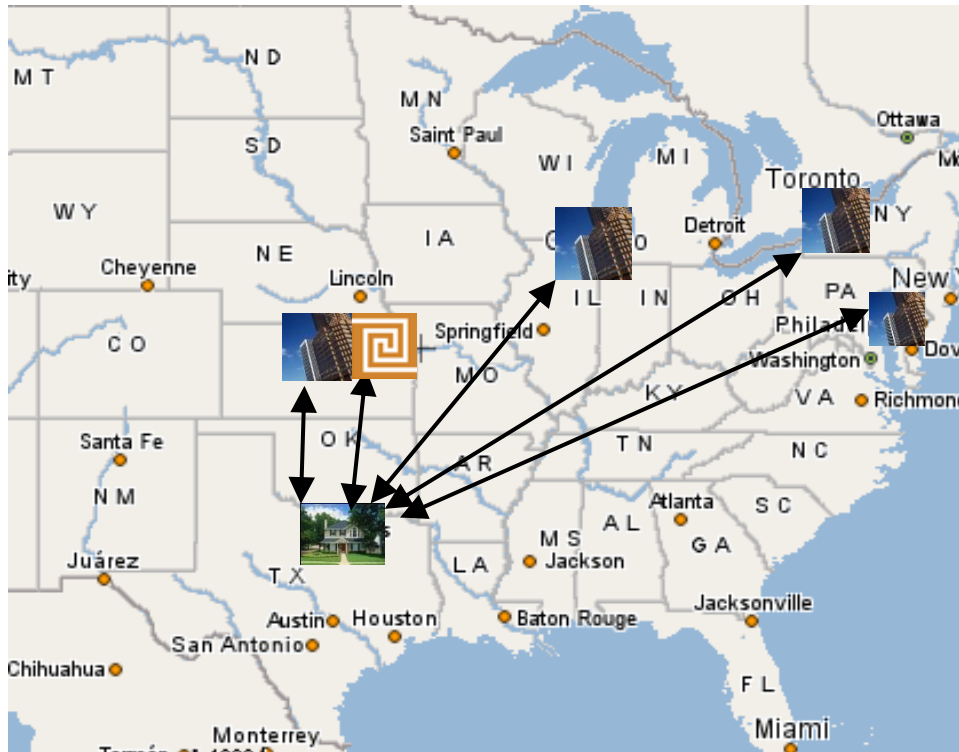




Background and Overview

VlamiS Career: Today

- Last 2 1/2 years, worked with several different clients
- Multiple projects at same time

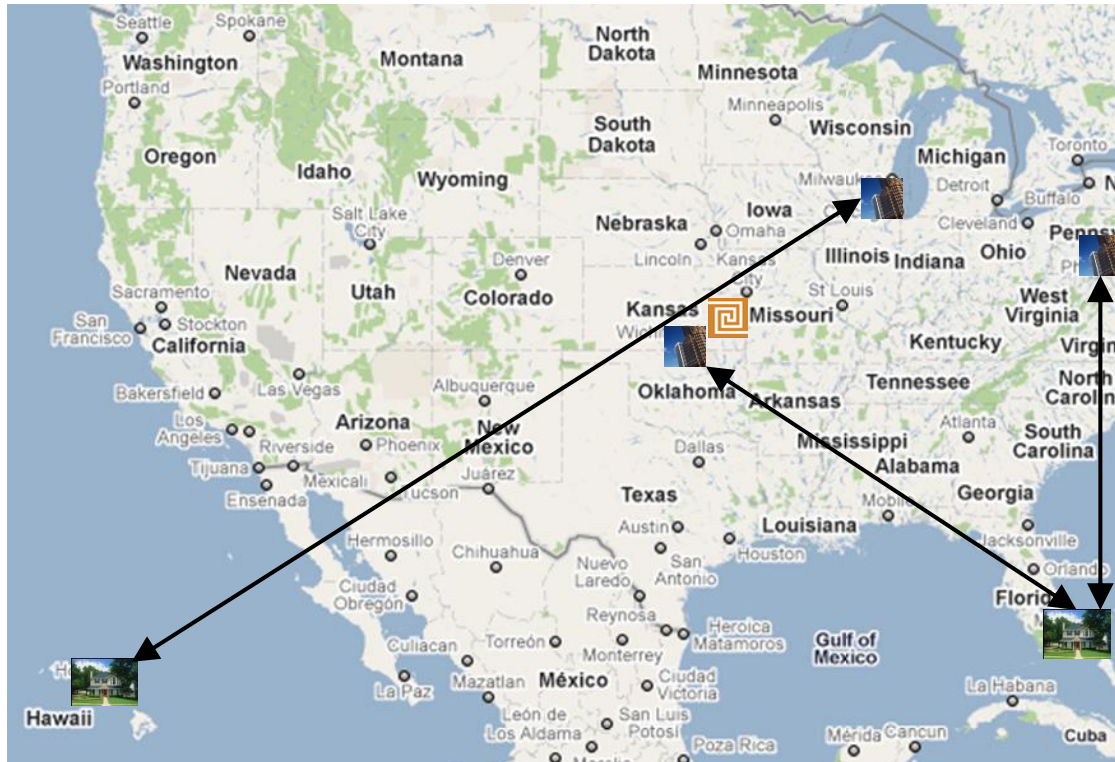




Background and Overview

Vlamiis Career: Today

- Not only multiple clients at the same time, but also I am set up to work from various locations.



In Hawaii, up at 4 work for 8 hours and at the beach for an afternoon nap by noon!



Employee/Consultant Benefits

\$\$\$ Savings

- Clothing and Dry Cleaning
- Childcare
- Vehicle Expense
- Dining Out
- House Cleaning



Employee/Consultant Benefits

Dry Cleaning	\$ 900
Childcare	\$10,000
Vehicle Expense	\$ 3,000
Dining Out	\$ 600
House Cleaning	\$ 2,500
Total Savings	\$17,000



Employee/Consultant Benefits

Balance of Home/Work Life

- Time saved from traveling
- Being at home for unplanned events
- Spending more time doing what I enjoy

Relief of stress

- Avoiding rush hour traffic
- Quickly addressing personal emergencies vs. meeting deadlines
- Needing to be home for deliveries or service negatively impacting work time
- Home with teenage kids



Company Benefits

Cost Savings

- Travel expenses if consulting
- Office space
- Misc. Office Equipment
- Relocation Expenses

Itemized Cost

Travel (if consulting)	\$60,000 per year
Office Expense	\$ 6,000 per year
Relocation Expense	\$ 40,000 one time



Company Benefits

Improved Productivity

- Less time spent traveling or commuting
- Easier to respond to personal needs therefore getting back to work sooner
- More convenient to work off hours
- Employees are more motivated

Hiring and Retaining Quality Employees

- Not limited to a particular geographical area
- Attract candidates that otherwise are not possible.
- Easier to find persons with specialized skill sets.
- Happier, loyal employees that can't get this deal elsewhere.

Why would I go anywhere else?



Company Benefits

Miscellaneous Benefits

- Employees are all over the country
- Ears to the ground in different areas
Dallas and Kansas City
- Improved responsiveness



Tools, Techniques, and Processes

What is a remote project like?

Onsite Visits

- Kick-off
Normally first week or two on-site
- Key Milestones Deliverables
- End of Project
Training
Knowledge Transfer
Project Overview



Tools, Techniques, and Processes

Communication

- Phones
- IM (Trillian allows multiple logins to different IM providers)
- E-Mail
- Conference Calls
- Web-Conferencing
- Video Conferencing



Tools, Techniques, and Processes

Software

- VPN

Running multiple VPNs can create an issue.
Sometimes firewalls will prevent you from accessing internet, IM, and e-mails.

- Remote Desktop

Microsoft Remote Desktop
VNC Remote Desktop

- GoToMeeting

- FTP

FileZilla



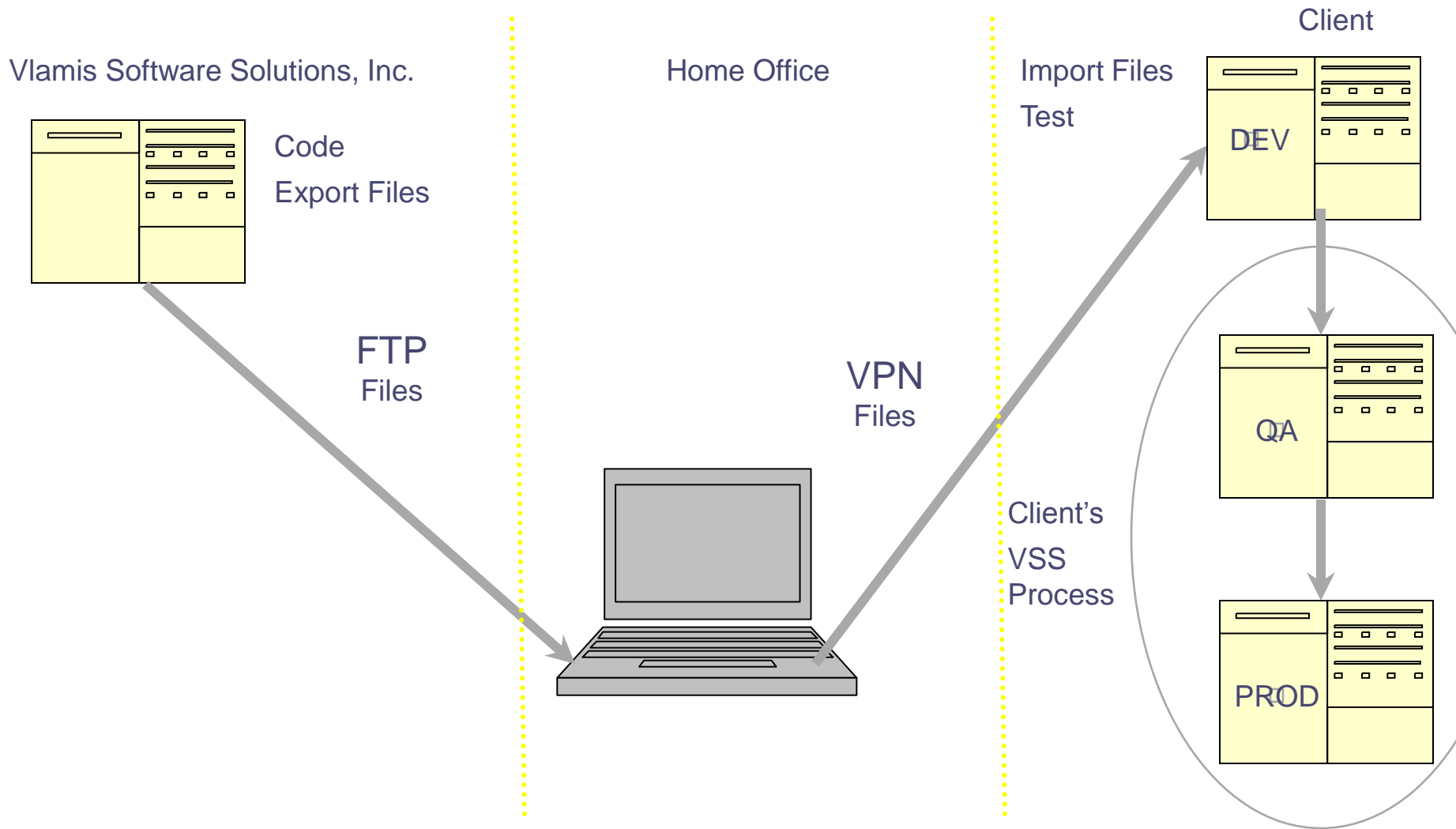
Tools, Techniques, and Processes

Processes

- Remote design
Design via conference calls and web conferencing
Produce mock up designs and e-mail to team for
feed back
- Remote development - how to do this in a group
environment
- Completing code drops
- Emergency fixes
- Check on the status of builds



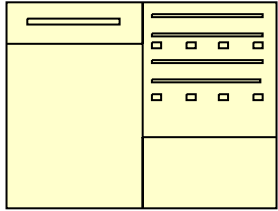
Tools, Techniques, and Processes



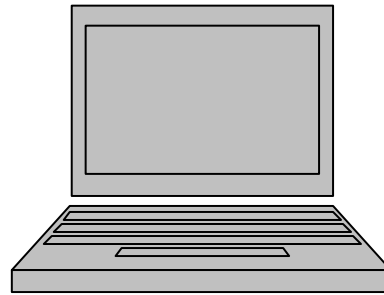


Tools, Techniques, and Processes

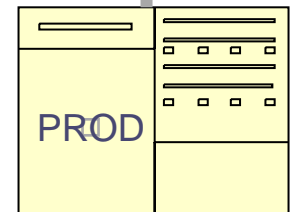
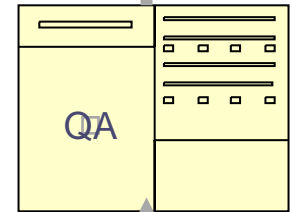
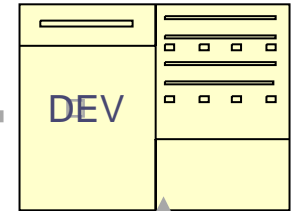
Vlami Software Solutions, Inc.



Home Office



Client





Handling Obstacles

Employee

- How will I keep from feeling disconnected from coworkers and/or clients?
- Will it be difficult to working alone everyday?
- What if I have laptop issues that need to quickly be resolved?
- Will it be difficult to focus on work?
- Is it difficult to turn your work off at night?
- Is it difficult to keep a professional environment?



Handling Obstacles

How will I keep from feeling disconnected from coworkers and/or clients?

- Phone Calls – it is o.k. to ask about something other than work
- E-mails – it is o.k. to send something personal every now and then
- Lunches or Happy Hours – if are close to the or other remote employees make an effort to visit



Handling Obstacles

Will it be difficult to working alone everyday?

It is possible, if so try the following:

- Go out to lunch once – twice a week
 - Co-workers
 - Customers / Potential Customers
 - Family and Friends
- If you have a hobby, spend a lunch hour enjoying your hobby.
- Do volunteer work at lunch



Handling Obstacles

Will it be difficult to focus on work?

Some days are better than other but here are some things to help out:

- Have a separate office
- Set standard work hours for yourself
- Set rules up with household members about office work hours and expected behavior



Handling Obstacles

Is it difficult to turn your work off at night?

For me YES! Try the following to help:

- Set standard work hours – working past those hours should be for last minute requirements or emergencies.
- Keep the laptop in the office if it is tempting you to work all hours for no real reason.
- Don't feel guilty.



Handling Obstacles

Is it difficult to keep a professional environment?

At times it can be, below are some things to keep in mind:

Outside noises

Dogs - keep barking dogs away from office when you using the phone

Children – if you have a in-house nanny watching young kids, make sure she understands the working rules. Toddlers can't understand.

Doorbells – You may want to put a sign up during business hours.



Handling Obstacles

Keep equipment working properly

- Phones need to be charged at all times
- Ensure you have good clear signal when using the cell phone.
- Speaker phones need to have a clear quality
- VOIP phones can disconnect randomly.
- Keep laptop and all internet equipment well maintained



Handling Obstacles

What if I have laptop issues that need to quickly be resolved?

IT staff is not as accessible as we would like, but are some suggestions to help with laptop issues:

- Use remote desktop for the support person remotely access your machine.
- Call 800 tech support numbers
- When you go on vacation, take your laptop in to be serviced by a local representative.



Handling Obstacles

Company/Client

- How will we communicate with each other?
- How do I keep the employees feeling part of our team?
- Will my client relationship suffer?
- What happens when the technology fails?
- How do I know they are working?



Handling Obstacles

How will we communicate with each other?

- E-mails – Usually work great for non-emergencies. Keep in mind that sometimes when using VPN, the person may not be able to access their e-mail.
- IM – Our preferred method of communication for quick questions or to see if someone is available to talk. Some VPN firewalls won't let you access IM, and you must remember to turn it back on when you are out of VPN.
- Phone Calls – Good for complex questions, but sometimes it can make a person lose their concentration if they are focusing on project work.



Handling Obstacles

Will my client relationship suffer?

I believe it could in the following areas:

- Missed opportunities - if you are onsite, people might see you in the hall or at your desk and think to ask “Does your company help with ...”

This one is tough and there is no way to overcome it 100% but try to make visits to see the client on a regular basis and see first hand what is going on



Handling Obstacles

- Loss of business - Some companies have varying opinions on consulting companies working remotely. If one of the decision makers has a issue with not seeing the consultant in the office every day, then your company will be at risk of losing the business.

To minimize this risk, initially, the consultant may need to spend time on-site with the client. Once the client the trust level is built, working remotely is less of an issue.



Handling Obstacles

- Building a personal relationship – not as easy to talk about non-business related topics that you might do when you are working side by side and going out to lunch but take a few minutes every now and then to find something about your client team. Most likely you will have something in common with them.

One client use to like the TV show “24”

Another client loves football



Handling Obstacles

What happens with technology fails?

It will and there is no way around it, having a back up plan is a must but sometimes that isn't good enough.

- Have multiple ways of communicating
 - Web conferencing (> 1 service)
 - Conference Calling
 - More than one phone (a cell is a must)
- Have more than one way to upload and down load files:
 - Remote Desktop
 - FTP



Handling Obstacles

- Consider options if you have a lose of internet connection:

Have a secondary place you can work

Neighbors – I had a single neighbor that worked during the day, and said I was welcome to use the connection at his house anytime

Share wireless with a neighbor

Family's workplaces – I borrowed an office at my husband's work when we moved and were without internet access for a week.

Internet Cafes – Can be loud and unprofessional.



Handling Obstacles

How do I keep the employees feeling part of our team?

- Company conference calls
 - What is the right number?
 - I feel we don't have enough
 - Co-workers may feel we have too many
- Company meetings
 - How often
 - On-site
 - Off-site
- Encourage remote employees to get together



Handling Obstacles

How do I know remote workers are really “working” ?

- Are they meeting their deadlines?
- Are they normally available with you try to contact them?
- Are you receiving complaints from others concerning the remote worker’s responsiveness?

You don't have to visually seem them to know they are working.



Client Viewpoints

Pros

Allows us to look for expertise outside of our geographic area without having all of the added cost of travel.

Helps reduce travel costs.

No need to provide a desk, computer, phone, etc.

Allows better scheduling flexibility, and therefore, greater availability

Cons

System access can be a barrier. Some access to client systems can only be achieved on-site.

Less face-to-face time can mean harder to keep track of project status.

Harder to train, ask questions, hold discussions, etc.



Client Viewpoints

When I asked my clients to comment on working remotely, the commented positively citing:

1. “You are very responsive. You get back to us quickly when we have questions or problems.”
2. “You are easy to contact and make yourself available. You let us know if you will not be available.”



Client Viewpoints

3. I think working remotely fits very well into an overall plan for a project such as ours. But there has to be a balance between working remotely and being on-site. I do not think a project such as ours could have been accomplished exclusively by working remotely. However, the ability to work remotely helped in keeping the project moving when you were not on-site. Not only did it help keeping travel costs down, but it allow some flexibility in scheduling so tasks could be accomplished outside of the weeks that you were on-site. I think it is also important to have face time as well. There are some aspects of the project that were just easier to accomplish on-site, such as training, answering questions about report mapping, and looking at our processes. Also, I know the fact that we did not allow access to some of our data from a computer outside the bank also hindered your progress.



Client Viewpoints

4. There are times it is important to be onsite. But the technology and culture now allow connecting remotely as a viable and more economical alternative. Besides the improved quality of life. Communication is slightly harder but can be overcome.



Client Viewpoints

5. “You can’t start a project as large as ours without an initial visit, and it was also necessary to have the web conferences. But you were able to teach us a huge amount in what was really a fairly short amount of time – about seven months once we got going. Doing it remotely meant that no one had to work on it full time, as you might have had to do if you had come to our offices for a number of weeks. It also meant that no one was stuck with nothing to do while s/he waited for someone else to finish something. Instead, we all balanced multiple projects and we were able to experiment as we went along.”



Summary

Over the Past 6 ½ I have worked at Vlami there has an actual cost savings:

- Cathye - \$80,5000
- Vlami - \$180,000
- Clients - \$350,000



Summary

Non-Tangible benefits

- Happier more productive employee
- Increase in employee responsiveness
- Retaining quality employees



Summary

Although you may work remotely, that doesn't mean you never leave your home office.

Remote work for each client and situation will vary.

For various reasons, some projects may need to be done 100% on-site.

The employee must always remain flexible.

Questions?

