

**Industry:**

IT Services

Location:

Denmark

Challenge:

To analyze, design, develop, deploy and maintain web based ERP solutions to customers.

Toolkit:**Solution:**

Using ready-made templates to do schematics, workflows, diagrams, flow charts.

Benefits:

Makes communicating the model of the world easy, makes the user communicate to the point with customers and they feel secure and better able to make decisions as to where the product should progress.

Walter Diechmann

Co-Founder

Create Documents Clients Expect to See

Walter Diechman is co-founder of ALCO, an information technology consulting company based in Denmark. ALCO offers its clients a broad range of enterprise resource planning services. It configures and optimizes computer firewalls, local area networks, and corporate phone systems. It consults on the development of applications for personal digital assistants (PDAs) and websites, and on the collection and management of data. ALCO relies on ConceptDraw Office to manage the implementation of these services, whether the client is working in a Windows, Mac OS, or Linux operating system.

While extensive technical knowledge is critical to ALCO's success, Diechmann is quick to point out that the backbone of their work is their ability to communicate clearly and concisely with clients. Business projects that involve technology usually bring with them a host of complicated analysis, design, development, deployment and maintenance considerations. What often sets ACLO apart comes down to a client's comfort level. ACLO quickly proves they have the technical prowess to handle the job. What seals the deal is ALCO's ability to communicate. This is where ConceptDraw gives them a secret weapon against competition.

Diechmann's use of ConceptDraw starts with early client interaction.

"During the Initial Analysis phase of a project it's very important", he says, "to ask clients the right questions. Equally important, you need to accurately capture the client's answer. If you don't, these early interactions can become a source of future problems. One way to make sure you've got it right is to do all this out in the open."

Diechmann prefers to present a ConceptDraw mind map, then use said mind map to create a set of "project notes." Not only does this decrease the chance of miscommunication. It also draws the client into the process itself, getting them involved in the creation of a solution right from the start.

"ConceptDraw mind maps make it relatively easy for us to go back to any point in the process, look at the public notes we created at that time, and make sure we designed for what the customer was asking for."

Keeping everyone engaged in the process and on the same page is particularly important during the Design phase. "Designing in this context always requires going back to the details over and over to get clarification on key points," Diechmann says. "It's important to our success that customers are not surprised by what comes out of development. When everything is laid out in front of you, chances are there will be a lot fewer surprises."

What seals the deal is ALCO's ability to communicate. "This is where ConceptDraw gives us a kind of secret weapon against our competition."

"This pays off when it comes time to actual deployment," he says, "How well you have been communicating with your client usually becomes clear at this stage of the process. Successful deployments flow directly from a mutual understanding of the original requirements and how they will be addressed in the Design phase. Even with the best-managed project, it's sometimes necessary to go back and remind the customer what they asked for and how your solution would address those needs. ConceptDraw MINDMAP makes it relatively easy for us to go back to any point in the process, look at the public notes we created at that time, and make sure we designed what the customer was asking for."

ALCO's use of mind mapping continues to evolve. The company was delighted to learn that ConceptDraw can add value through the very end of the process. When the implementation is complete and the project moves into the maintenance phase, mind maps built along the way serve as very useful documents. This is all the more so as the mind maps can be exported as text documents, outlines, PowerPoint slides, project plans and business graphics—whatever document form best serves the needs of the customer.

"The business templates provided within ConceptDraw Office are an excellent way to create documents and reports that clients expect to see as part of the process," Diechmann says. "I use a lot of the ready-made ConceptDraw templates to produce schematics, workflows, diagrams and flow charts. The capability to create these documents quickly is a big help to my clients. So it's a big help to ALCO too."

While some companies are reluctant to open up their processes as much as ALCO has, Diechmann says that this openness has been good for business. "We find that by letting the process unfold before our clients, they have a much better understanding and appreciation of the expertise we bring to the project."

Diechmann believes that it takes a special kind of application to pull this off. ConceptDraw's use of short key words and phrases, along with its expressive graphic elements, help keep everyone on the same page, and that's useful to ALCO throughout the process.

"Add the ease in producing all of the notes and documents required in complex technical solutions, and you can see why ConceptDraw is one of our most heavily used tools." ■



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