Tempus Resource
by ProSymmetry

Focusrite®

Tempus Resource Case Study

Challenge

Focusrite offers audio interfaces and other solutions for recording musicians, producers, podcasters, and audio professionals alike. Today the company is famous for offering industry leading sonic performance at every price point, notably the ubiquitous Scarlett range of USB interfaces. A global company that's publicly listed in the United Kingdom, Focusrite relentlessly pursues opportunities to inspire creativity through technology, constantly seeking new ways to eliminate technological barriers without compromising on sound quality.

Nick Thomson, Head of Operations for Focusrite, recognized the need for a resource management platform that could better assist the company with planning and forecasting. "We design, market, and sell audio technology, both hardware and software products for people and businesses who want to create, record, and produce music. Since we develop and design our own hardware and software products, at any point we're trying to develop, maintain, and ultimately deliver a product roadmap. Having a single source of truth for our roadmaps, stretching into the future, is something invaluable to us." Before implementing Tempus, Focusrite leaders struggled to put together and maintain in a coherent way a roadmap that they could collaborate on as a team and share with their resource managers, programme management team, and product management team. Properly allocating resources to meet their roadmap was a big struggle for Focusrite as well. Thomson continues, "Being able to say with any credibility that this is what we think we can deliver with our resource pool, this is what we can't, any number of scenarios and what-ifs – we needed all of those things, but we couldn't do them. We were mainly utilizing spreadsheets to capture our roadmap projects, and we were trying to do some resource planning, but it wasn't ideal."

Solution

Tempus Resource by ProSymmetry is a purpose-built, resource portfolio management solution providing many Fortune 500 companies with resource forecasting and capacity planning solutions to help make strategic decisions for their businesses. With capabilities including bulk resource forecasting, skills and talent management, portfolio and resource capacity reporting and interactive scenario planning and What-If analysis, Tempus gives organizations actionable intelligence, cutting-edge analytics, and real-time scenario analysis.

When Focusrite began searching for a more advanced resource management platform in 2021, Thomson recognized the value that Tempus could bring his organization. "While we were researching resource management platforms, there were good use cases for Tempus, and it seemed to be the only product that could really meet them. Tempus's What-If functionality was and is still unique. That was important for our organization. Being able to do this enterprise resource allocation at FTE (full time equivalent) level and maintain a portfolio of projects, I don't think we found another tool that could do that. It's not overly complex at the end of the day. Here are your resources, here are your projects, here are what they are allocated to."

Benefit

The impact of Focusrite implementing Tempus was realized very quickly, as the data that Tempus was able to provide helped Focusrite leaders and resource managers concentrate on resourcing issues and forecasts more easily. Thomson continues, "Tempus has had a big impact. It makes our work much less subjective. Data is not everything and we don't only look at numbers, but Tempus focuses the conversations a lot more easily. We can get away from talking in very general terms and can identify and hone in on the problem areas. We have more efficient meetings, we have more ownership from our resource managers and team managers. We make better and faster decisions about which projects we're going to invest in and move forward, and which ones we're going to stop as well."

Focusrite has large groups of users, including product management and programme management teams, who are very involved in building and maintaining their organization's product roadmaps, including which projects are in the system, their current status in the timeline, which projects are a priority, and any certain attributes those projects have against them like costs or business benefits. Another user group are the resource managers, who utilize Tempus to maintain their teams, identify the capacity of their resources, and forecast utilization based on the projects in the queue. Focusrite aligns its use of Tempus for their product development efforts with their governance framework across the company to better develop products. To maximize their efforts and ensure they are making the most of the data coming from Tempus, Focusrite leaders have regular touchpoints to look at the data together and talk about what's changed, such as new projects being added, making sure that everyone understands what these projects are and what they are going to involve. This allows the resource managers to go forecast and feed those changes through.

Tempus helps Focusrite leaders focus both on its resources and strategic goals. Thomson describes, "We use Tempus to make sure we're getting the best return on investment for about 300 resources in our system, but also to make sure that everyone understands all the things coming up in the future, all the new projects that we're going to be kicking off, and so on."

When it comes to making decisions that impact the portfolio of work, Focusrite leaders take advantage of Tempus's scenario planning feature, the What-If analysis. Without altering actual resource forecast data or project plans, Tempus's What-If scenario building tool can let decision makers ask unlimited questions of their data, then receive actionable insights to formulate just as many strategic alternatives. Thomson continues, "Tempus's What-If module is very helpful for us. We use it a lot to simulate changes to dates and resource allocations within our roadmap." Additionally, Focusrite uses Tempus for capacity planning and factoring in investment costs and opportunity costs for its various projects. The resource allocation data from Tempus helps drive project investments for Focusrite. Thomson says Tempus "feeds into our business cases, such as 'is this project going to be worth it?' based on non-refundable engineering costs and overhead costs associated with our people."

Tempus has also helped Focusrite conduct more thorough analysis of its roadmap, including being able to see any sort of risk areas where their resources might be overloaded, areas where they might have some capacity, or which projects are at risk because they might have open demand on them.

Results

Having implemented a resource portfolio management solution has helped Focusrite leaders have a better grasp of overall resource utilization and more efficient planning and forecasting. "One benefit of Tempus is that we now have data from all of our resource managers doing an honest appraisal of how much of people's time is spent on non-project work such as maintenance work, admin, and learning and development. That's been very powerful because it's allowed us to make sure that we recognize those buckets of time and that we're also planning for them, and being realistic about whether people are using that time or not. Tempus has allowed us to honestly appraise where people genuinely have capacity to work on projects versus none."

The ability to resource plan more efficiently and with more flexibility built into Tempus has benefited Focusrite leadership when changes to the roadmap inevitably occur. "We release a lot of new products each year," continues Thomson. "We have a responsibility to maintain those products, to maintain the software and firmware, making sure any bugs or issues in the field are fixed. If Apple releases a new operating system version, we need to make sure our software is compatible. Forecasting and carving out time for planning has been really helpful, and it's reduced the amount of time we need for 'drop everything, urgent, firefighting' situations because we're preemptively setting aside some capacity."

Thomson describes how changes in the markets or outside factors can impact Focusrite's hardware and software development, so having a flexible solution like Tempus has helped Focusrite leaders make changes more easily. "We need to maintain a dynamic roadmap of projects that responds to market trends and customer feedback and our competitors as well. We're in control of our own destiny as far as what we want to bring to market, but the landscape can change quite quickly. During the semiconductor crisis over the last couple of years, we had a number of our products that we needed to redesign because we couldn't get the parts that we needed. We had to update the physical hardware design to take different parts instead. There were some pretty short term, reactive decisions we needed to make, introducing new projects, and having something like Tempus in place to show the impact and what that would mean we couldn't do as a result was helpful."

Tempus allows companies like Focusrite to take advantage of demand planning resources and assign placeholders to a project. Then, once the exact resource is assigned or selected, they can be replaced in Tempus. Speaking about the demand planning feature of Tempus, Thomson explains, "I think the concept of having demand in Tempus has really been a game changer. That's quite a unique feature of Tempus and it's not something we ever factored in before. We used to try to do some rudimentary planning in Excel,

as I'm sure a lot of people do. Tempus helps us with the ability to examine projects we haven't managed to fill yet. For me, it's about implicit risk; wherever we have open demand, that's the stuff that is at risk. Everything else should be a case of 'it's work, it's assigned to people, we're going to do it.' The demand concept has been super helpful."

Focusrite leaders enjoy employing the proposal functionality of Tempus for better resource planning and making sure plans for the roadmap are progressing. Tempus also allows for users to treat proposed projects differently than active or committed ones for planning purposes. Thomson continues, "the proposal feature is useful as well because it allows our product management team to have their own sort of sandbox area where they can create new projects, they can create whole programs or roadmaps, and have data that is not going to appear in resource managers' reporting or day-to-day tasks as it's classed as a proposal. No one is going to suddenly open Tempus and see that we're looking at ways to possibly do this project. By keeping the project in proposal mode, we don't create situations of confusion where someone sees projects and says, 'hang on a second, I need another two engineers this month, what's going on?'"

Because the adoption of Tempus has been beneficial for Focusrite's resource managers as well as product and programme development teams, the organization has now started using Tempus for business transformation projects including supporting IT systems and operational and e-commerce platforms. Thomson says, "Tempus has been successfully adopted to the point where we've started to grow the usage into some other areas in the company as well, which has been great."

Focusrite has had a positive experience with the Customer Success team at ProSymmetry, including implementation through upgrades. Thomson says, "Our first experience was during the implementation. We had a really good experience there. We worked with one of ProSymmetry's implementation partners who was very helpful, very competent, knew the tool inside out, and helped us really meet our requirements even though a few of them were very esoteric just based on the way our systems are set up." Thomson says ongoing customer support from ProSymmetry has been very responsive and helpful.