

Software development manager

After working in customer education at Qantel for two years, Bryce was recruited to work as the Application Software Development Manager, a new position in the company. Rather early in the history of the business computer industry, Qantel had recognized that software sells systems. As a young company, Qantel had commissioned a full accounting and business information software package. In an unusual move, they gave the source code to their dealers and third-party software developers (but not to the end users). These people added features to the base code and designed a slew of products for many industries, including wholesale distributors, retailers, small and medium-sized businesses, NFL football teams, and many more.

Detailed information

Qantel made a strategic decision to acquire several of these software products, including one for retail stores, another for electrical wholesalers, one for paper distributors, and one for hotels and resorts. They needed a person to oversee the overall development effort for these software packages. That person was Bryce.

Bryce quickly discovered that the software for most of these products had originally been developed as custom systems, and that the programmers were still writing “custom code” for their existing users. It’s hard to make the transition from custom code writing to developing a software “package” and Bryce started to lead this effort. (In Bryce’s view of an ideal world, business application software development would begin with marketing research, and then product managers would prioritize which features would be coded. The programmers would build the apps, test and document the code, and release the product to the field.)

One of the first things Bryce did was to hire a firm that specialized in software testing and documentation. This firm began to work with the software developers Bryce managed. Since the developers were still writing custom code, they had frequent “releases” of their products, sometimes as often as once a week. This overwhelmed the testing company and they tried to put on the brakes.

Bryce started to implement controls and standards. He tried to stop the custom coding and move towards the ideal approach mentioned above. He worked closely with the product managers and together

they made the necessary transitions. (Qantel's successor company still sells and supports some of these products with many new features having been added over the years.)

After two years, Bryce was again recruited to manage a different division of the company – Technical and Marketing Communications Services. He accepted the offer.