

SUNGARD® PUBLIC SECTOR

Solutions Provider Adopts Common Platform for Productivity, Customer-Service Benefits

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Professional services

Customer Profile

SunGard Public Sector provides solutions and services for local governments, public safety and nonprofit organizations, and state and federal agencies. It is based in Lake Mary, Florida, and is part of SunGard Data Systems, which employs 20,000 people.

Business Situation

SunGard Public Sector needed tools and technologies to support its launch of a new product line.

Solution

SunGard Public Sector implemented Microsoft Visual Studio and other Microsoft technologies to create a common development platform.

Benefits

- Easier team management
- New-hire training time cut by half
- Ability to match talent with focused development sprints
- More timely customer contact

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James Harris, Senior Director, SunGard Public Sector

SunGard Public Sector provides a broad range of software solutions and services to local governments, public safety agencies, and nonprofits. In 2007, the company decided to expand its product line to serve a growing number of customers who want solutions in the Microsoft environment. SunGard Public Sector launched a major development initiative and simultaneously transformed its process methodology from waterfall to agile/scrum. To support this endeavor, the company implemented the Microsoft Visual Studio development system and other Microsoft development and collaboration technologies. Today, the firm enjoys higher productivity, stronger collaboration among widely dispersed teams, dramatically shorter “time to peak productivity” for new hires, and more timely communications with customers.

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James Harris, Senior Director,
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Situation

More than one in three residents of the United States lives in a city, county, or state that relies on public administration or public safety software and services from solutions provider SunGard Public Sector. From its headquarters in Lake Mary, Florida, and offices in California, Pennsylvania, Washington, and India, SunGard Public Sector builds and supports software solutions for local governments, public safety and nonprofit organizations, and state and federal government agencies. The company now known as SunGard Public Sector has roots that go back 30 years, and since 2003, it has been part of Philadelphia-based SunGard Data Systems, one of the largest privately held business solutions providers in the world.

In 2007, SunGard Public Sector launched an initiative to build a comprehensive product line, known as ONESolution, that runs on the Windows operating system and employs a service-oriented architecture (SOA). Starting with a core group of 50 developers, the ONESolution initiative grew to encompass more than 300 development professionals working at all four SunGard Public Sector locations.

From the start of the initiative, the company faced multiple challenges, according to James Harris, Senior Director at SunGard Public Sector. "We were launching a major new product line while continuing investment in and support of our current, flagship product line—the one on which we built our company reputation," he says. "On top of this, we faced the added complexities of supporting communication, collaboration, and workflow for development professionals distributed


among 10 teams at sites in four widely dispersed geographic locations."

Solution

To address these challenges, Harris and his colleagues decided to migrate the company's software-development processes from a traditional, sequential waterfall methodology to a more flexible and iterative agile/scrum methodology. In accordance with this methodology, SunGard Public Sector organizes the work of ONESolution developers according to a staggered schedule of 20-day "sprints," in which a team applies 200 to 300 hours of work toward development and testing of a given feature and then submits that work for review.

To support the agile/scrum methodology, Harris's team briefly considered using Axosoft OnTime scrum project-management software, but they turned instead to the Microsoft Visual Studio Team System 2008 Team Suite development system. "We liked the idea of supporting our process methodology through the same tool set we would be using for development," Harris says. "We also felt that, compared with OnTime, Visual Studio Team System Team Suite would provide a stronger approach to organizing current and backlogged work and reporting on work as it moves through different teams, quality control, and release management."

For Harris and his colleagues, another reason for selecting Visual Studio Team System Team Suite was its flexibility with respect to process templates. "In preparing for our move to an agile/scrum methodology, we attended training offered by a company that produces an excellent agile/scrum process template," Harris says. "We were



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happy to learn that Visual Studio Team System Team Suite accommodates that template as seamlessly as it does the process templates from Microsoft.”

Yet another factor behind the decision to use Visual Studio Team System Team Suite was the prospect of interoperation between that technology and other Microsoft technologies for communication and collaboration. A couple of years into the ONESolution project, Harris’s team upgraded from Visual Studio Team System 2008 Team Suite to Microsoft Visual Studio 2010 Ultimate, which includes Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2010 and Microsoft Visual Studio Test Professional 2010, among other companion products.

The team also implemented Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 and Microsoft Project Server 2010 to help manage processes surrounding quality, and Microsoft Dynamics CRM 4.0 to support hotfixes and alert-tracking processes. In early 2012, the team will upgrade to Microsoft Dynamics CRM 2011.

Today, SunGard Public Sector is using Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2010 to implement continuous agile/scrum planning into a fully integrated software-development life cycle, across multiple teams, offices, and time zones. “From feature planning, development, testing, and document through release management and customer-issue tracking, Visual Studio supports an integrated and transparent process for all stakeholders,” Harris says.


For example, taking advantage of the product’s support for continuous builds, SunGard Public Sector has established an alert system that automatically notifies any developer whose code has broken

the daily build. The company also uses Team Foundation Server to organize test plans and test suites, track testing, and streamline other tasks associated with coding, testing, quality assurance, support, and more. In addition, developers and other SunGard Public Sector employees whose work is focused on the company’s current products are using Team Foundation Server for all tasks except source-code control.

To further team collaboration on the ONESolution initiative, SunGard Public Sector has paired Team Foundation Server with the following Microsoft technologies:

- Microsoft SharePoint 2010, for disseminating design artifacts and supporting distributed collaboration, change alerts, and other important development process communications—an essential practice, according to Harris, in an organization that has developers working in three different time zones, separated by as much as 11 hours
- Microsoft Dynamics CRM, for supporting customer-case management with a uniform tracking method that ties multiple cases to a single Team Foundation Server work item
- Microsoft Project Server 2010, for managing complex schedules for customers who want to take advantage of cloud services, in which they can access ONESolution and other SunGard Public Sector products through software-as-a service licensing

In the future, SunGard Public Sector will integrate Team Foundation Server with a third-party solution that the company now uses for source-code control on its current product line. This move will



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enable those employees who support the current products to use Team Foundation Server to the same extent as their colleagues who focus exclusively on ONESolution.

Benefits

At SunGard Public Sector, hundreds of development professionals are changing the way they work for the better with the help of the Microsoft development and collaboration technologies the company has implemented. For the first time, teams across all four offices enjoy a common collaboration platform. New employees are productive much faster than before. Developers can work on the scheduled development sprints where their talents are most needed. And customers are receiving more timely support.

Uniting Developers Across Time Zones

SunGard Public Sector uses Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2010 and other Microsoft technologies extensively to streamline and simplify the management of its widely distributed development environment. In particular, through the interoperation of Team Foundation Server 2010 and SharePoint Server 2010, SunGard Public Sector gives developers and others a powerful platform for enhancing productivity.

This is especially the case for developers who collaborate across the 11-hour time difference between the company's California and India offices. “When teams must work together while lacking any overlap of the standard work day, a common platform for collaboration is vital for enhancing productivity, or even just maintaining it,” Harris says. “Through Team Foundation Server and SharePoint 2010, we finally have that common collaboration platform.”

Expediting New-Hire Training


Even besides the time differences, SunGard Public Sector faces a major productivity challenge when bringing aboard new developers. But with the help of effective training and a common tool set, process methodology, and collaboration platform provided through the Microsoft technologies, SunGard Public Sector is mitigating that challenge significantly.

“We find it much easier to train new hires on running sprints, testing, managing bugs, and so on,” Harris reports. “As a result, we have reduced the time required for new employees to reach their peak productivity by more than half—from eight weeks down to just three weeks.”

Matching Talents with Needs

For new hires and long-term employees alike, SunGard Public Sector is also making far better use of professional skills and talents. For example, in the past, no matter how well a given developer's skills might fit with the needs of a certain sprint, if that developer did not work at the same offices as others on the sprint, he or she could not be assigned to it.

“The problem of colocation—requiring that developers on a given sprint work in the same geographic location—is widespread among software-development firms, and historically, SunGard Public Sector was no exception,” Harris says. “But now, with our common collaboration platform, geographic location plays little, if any, role in matching developers with sprint teams. Instead, we can apply individual specialties where they are needed most, strengthening teams and boosting employee satisfaction.”



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Chris Harrington, Customer Support Operations Manager, SunGard Public Sector

Serving Customers Better

With its move to a common development and collaboration environment, SunGard Public Sector can also keep customers better informed by alerting them to code changes more promptly. Specifically, with the customer case-management system implemented through the interoperation of Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Team Foundation Server, case owners have earlier knowledge of when and how a given work item has been resolved and can inform customers that much sooner of when they can expect a given update.

“This method provides a more efficient approach to alerting customers than the company’s prior method, in which the different business units used different ways of handling change requests,” says Chris Harrington, Customer Support Operations Manager at SunGard Public Sector. “Customers now can receive far more accurate status on change requests and notification of when a given change is complete and ready to install.”

Harris concurs. “From helping manage a widely distributed development environment to raising productivity and customer satisfaction, the adoption of Microsoft development and collaboration technologies at SunGard Public Sector was clearly a move in the right direction,” he says.

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to:

www.microsoft.com

For more information about SunGard Public Sector products and services, call (866) 965-7732 or visit the website at:

www.sungardps.com

Microsoft Visual Studio 2010

Microsoft Visual Studio 2010 is an integrated environment that helps simplify the entire development process from design to deployment. Unleash your creativity with powerful prototyping, modeling, and design tools that let you bring your vision to life. Work within a personalized environment that helps accelerate the coding process and supports the use of your existing skills, and target a growing number of platforms, including Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 and cloud-based services. Also, work more efficiently thanks to integrated testing and debugging tools that you can use to find and fix bugs quickly and easily to help ensure high-quality solutions.

For more information about Visual Studio 2010, go to:

www.msdn.microsoft.com/vstudio

Software and Services

- Microsoft Visual Studio
 - Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2010
- Microsoft Dynamics
 - Microsoft Dynamics CRM 4.0
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010
 - Microsoft Project Server 2010
- Technologies
 - Microsoft .NET Framework 4

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