



Insurance Company Expects to Cut Software Development Time and Costs by 20 Percent

Overview

Country or Region: Sweden

Industry: Financial services—Property and casualty insurance

Customer Profile

Länsförsäkringar AB is an insurance and banking firm in Stockholm, Sweden. It is owned by an alliance of 24 regional companies, which has approximately 5,800 employees and 3.2 million customers.

Business Situation

Länsförsäkringar was using manual software development processes that could slow delivery. It wanted to automate testing and manage requirements more efficiently.

Solution

Länsförsäkringar deployed beta versions of Microsoft Visual Studio 2010 Ultimate, Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2010, and Visual Studio Lab Management 2010.

Benefits

- Meets requirements more efficiently
- Cuts development time and costs by 20 percent
- Improves customer service

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Tomas Scott, Solution Architect—System Development Platform, Länsförsäkringar AB

The application development team at Länsförsäkringar AB, a Swedish insurance and banking company, wanted to simplify and speed software development. The team’s customers relied on it for specialized applications. However, the team was using manual development methods that slowed delivery. To improve application lifecycle management, Länsförsäkringar decided to adopt Microsoft Visual Studio 2010 along with iterative development techniques. The company is using built-in agile planning tools and a virtual test laboratory with automated builds and deployment. It also looks forward to using the IntelliTrace debugging tool to find and resolve bugs more easily. Now, the team can keep projects on track, and Länsförsäkringar expects to cut development time and costs by 20 percent. The company also expects to deliver better applications and ultimately improve customer service.



“With Visual Studio 2010 ... we can work with an agile method and deliver something executable every third week. We can do that now because we’re automating builds, deployment, and tests.”

Tomas Scott, Solution Architect--System Development Platform, Länsförsäkringar AB

Situation

Located in Stockholm, Sweden, Länsförsäkringar AB is owned by 24 regional insurance and banking companies. The Länsförsäkringar companies operate independently, and together they serve more than 3.2 million customers. The alliance has approximately 5,800 employees throughout Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Although the regional firms manage most of their local IT infrastructure, they rely on Länsförsäkringar to design and administer line-of-business applications that are shared by the companies. Product specialists in Länsförsäkringar collect requirements and then work with the IT department—a team of approximately 300 employees—to create or revise software used for customer service and other mission-critical activities.

The Länsförsäkringar team, which handled most of its software development processes manually, faced several challenges. “We usually documented requirements in Microsoft Office Word, and we’ve had problems keeping track of changes,” says Tomas Scott, Solution Architect—System Development Platform at Länsförsäkringar AB. “The test managers responsible for tasks such as writing test cases and software bugs wanted a tool for both tracking progress and tracing changes back to the original requirements.”

The development team had to meet tight deadlines. However, manual testing processes and difficulty in reproducing bugs could extend the development timeline. Although delays could be costly, releasing an application prematurely had other risks, Scott says. “If we sent an unresolved bug into production because we couldn’t reproduce it, we just had to

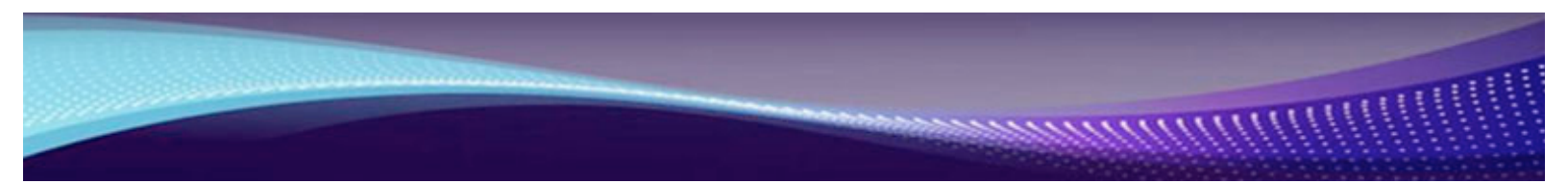
hope that it didn’t occur again and affect business processes.”

Länsförsäkringar needed to respond faster to customer needs. “It’s vital for us to be agile and to be able to shorten the time from when we start a project to when we can actually deliver,” Scott says. “We’re also getting increased pressure from users to deliver more value. I know what the industry trends are too, and I realized that we needed to go in the direction of more automation.”

To improve its application lifecycle management (ALM) processes, Länsförsäkringar adopted the Microsoft Visual Studio 2005 Team Suite development system and eventually migrated all of its databases from Microsoft Visual SourceSafe 2005 version control software to Microsoft Visual Studio 2005 Team Foundation Server. The company was impressed with the Visual Studio products, but it still struggled with manual processes and meeting customer requirements efficiently. After establishing a central source control repository, the Länsförsäkringar team wanted a solution that it could integrate with Team Foundation Server and use to manage requirements and testing.

Solution

Länsförsäkringar reviewed several lifecycle solutions, including Rational ClearCase from IBM and products from Compuware Corporation. The company looked at tools that it could use to manage requirements, and test plans and use cases. However, no single product offered the integration and capabilities that Länsförsäkringar wanted. Then it heard about Microsoft Visual Studio 2010 and decided to become an early adopter. Scott says, “We learned that we could get all the functionality we were looking for in Visual



Studio 2010, including built-in test case management and integration with Team Foundation Server.”

Länsförsäkringar decided to run a pilot project involving Microsoft Visual Studio 2010 Ultimate and a multitier application that would be used by customer service representatives. The system would have a thin-client interface built with Windows Presentation Foundation in the Microsoft .NET Framework 3.5. It would also have an application tier built with Windows Communication Foundation in the .NET Framework 4 and connected to Microsoft SQL Server 2008 Standard data management software. The application would populate Microsoft Office Word 2007 documents with customer information pulled from other insurance systems.

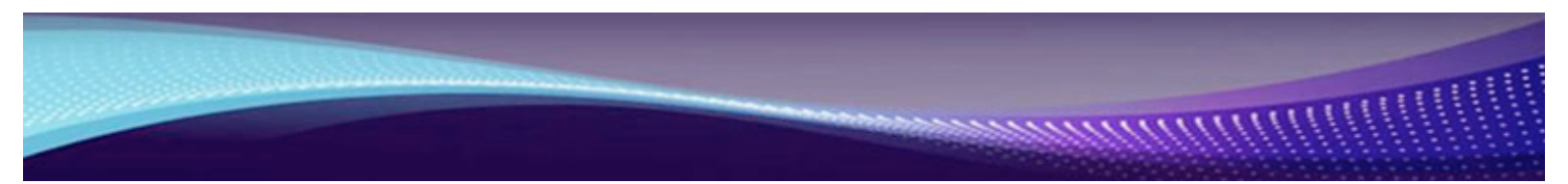
Länsförsäkringar also turned to Ivar Jacobson International, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, to create a more agile work environment. The IT services company helped Länsförsäkringar adopt a more structured ALM approach with iterative development driven by use cases. Ivar Jacobson International also created a new process template that works with the agile planning workbook in Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2010. The workbook makes it easier to adopt agile software development methodologies, and it can be used to manage the product backlog and iteration planning. The process template takes advantage of Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2010 capabilities such as build automation, reporting, test case management, and requirements management.

Using Team Foundation Build in Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2010, the Länsförsäkringar team can create an

automated workflow to build and deploy the database, and run automated tests in a virtual environment. The team is also using Microsoft Visual Studio Lab Management 2010 to create and manage lab environments by taking advantage of Hyper-V virtualization technology. Developers used the lab management solution to set up a virtual test lab with a desktop client, a database server, and a Web application server. The automated workflow builds the solution, reverts to a clean snapshot, deploys the build, and then uses Microsoft SQL Server 2008 Integration Services to populate the new database with information from the old database. Automated tests are run on the environment in the final step.

The test results are stored in Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2010, and the team can use detailed reports about the completed or ongoing build to make changes. The development team can access all the information concerning its lab environment through the Microsoft Visual Studio Team Explorer Everywhere 2010 client application. “If we alter our services or database code and it fails our nightly build, then we can find all the information in one place and correct the error,” says Scott.

Länsförsäkringar is using gated check-in—a build option in Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2010—to protect its work. Source code changes must be built and run successfully before they can be checked in, which prevents developers from entering flawed code that could break the build. Länsförsäkringar also looks forward to taking advantage of IntelliTrace, a debugging tool that it can use to find reported bugs in the state in which they occurred.



“IntelliTrace is exciting because for the first time we will be able to actually see why an error occurred and the data that it passed to a function and failed. And if I can trace it, I can fix it.”

Tomas Scott, Solution Architect--System Development Platform, Länsförsäkringar AB

Länsförsäkringar has recently started using the new coded UI testing feature to automate testing of user interface elements. The development team has multiple options—for example, it can create automated tests from an existing manual test or from recorded user actions. It can also run the tests from Visual Studio 2010 Ultimate or Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2010 and link test cases to user requirements. The team has started to create and run manual tests and track progress with Microsoft Test Manager 2010, a new tool for manual testers.

Benefits

With Visual Studio 2010 and an iterative development strategy driven by use cases, Länsförsäkringar is better equipped to meet customer requirements. It can deliver applications faster and at less cost, and improve customer service with high-quality software.

Meets Requirements More Efficiently

With Visual Studio 2010, Länsförsäkringar is implementing an integrated ALM environment that will help it better meet customer requirements. “The test and lab management features in Visual Studio 2010 are very useful,” says Scott. “We now have a virtual lab environment where we can easily reproduce our builds and deployment cycles. It’s not something flashy to demonstrate—it just sort of runs in the background—but it’s really important.”

By aligning test cases with requirements, the Länsförsäkringar team stays focused and meets milestones more efficiently. “With Visual Studio 2010, if we have a major project, we can work with an agile method and deliver something executable every third week,” Scott says. “We can do

that now because we’re automating builds, deployment, and tests.”

Cuts Development Time and Costs by 20 Percent

According to Scott, automation and best practices are key to accelerating software delivery and improving quality. Länsförsäkringar expects to cut costs with its streamlined processes. “I believe we can cut development time and costs by at least 20 percent with Visual Studio 2010 if we take full advantage of the solution,” says Scott. “As a result, we can deliver more value to our customers.”

For example, the team saves time by creating automated workflows and tests that run in a virtual environment. “Before, the build-deploy-test lifecycle took several days to finish,” says Scott. “Now, it’s done automatically at night with Visual Studio 2010, and in the morning we can take care of the bugs that appear.”

He anticipates further improvements with expanded use of the new solution’s tools and features. For example, by using IntelliTrace to track and record events, Länsförsäkringar will be able to find and correct errors more consistently. As a result, it expects to shorten the debugging cycle and send fewer bugs into production. “IntelliTrace is exciting because for the first time we will be able to actually see why an error occurred and the data that it passed to a function and failed,” Scott says. “And if I can trace it, I can fix it.”

Improves Customer Service

At Länsförsäkringar, a successful development project isn’t defined just by achieving desired results in lab tests and meeting requirements for features and delivery deadlines. The final test is how well the application performs in a

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business environment. “Bugs take time, and time is money. So solving problems faster is a concrete business benefit,” says Scott. “However, it’s equally important to know that the application works when an employee is on the phone with a client. In the end, we can provide better customer satisfaction with Visual Studio 2010.”

Microsoft Visual Studio 2010

Microsoft Visual Studio 2010 is an integrated development system that helps simplify the entire development process from design to deployment. Unleash your creativity with powerful prototyping, modeling, and design tools that help 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 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 2010 Ultimate
 - Microsoft Visual Studio Lab Management 2010
 - Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation Server 2010
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft SQL Server 2008 Standard
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office Word 2007
- Technologies
 - IntelliTrace
 - Microsoft .NET Framework 3.5
 - Microsoft .NET Framework 4
 - Microsoft Test Manager 2010
 - Microsoft SQL Server 2008 Integration Services
 - Microsoft Visual Studio Team Explorer Everywhere 2010
 - Windows Communication Foundation
 - Windows Presentation Foundation

Partners

- Ivar Jacobson International

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