

IBM Podcast

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MATHENY: Welcome to this IBM podcast. When the going gets rough, succeed with requirements-driven quality. I'm Angelique Matheny with IBM.

We are experiencing one of the most difficult economic climates in decades. The conversation has turned from innovation and winning in the marketplace to one of surviving and staying afloat until the crisis has passed.

In this podcast, Beth Friday, VP for Worldwide Client Support with Rational, will talk about strategies for survival: strategies that include the imperative to deliver winning solutions despite limited resources through requirements-driven quality.

And joining me today is Theresa Kratschmer, IBM Solutions Marketing Manager. Hi, Theresa, welcome to the podcast. Thanks for joining us.

KRATSCHMER: Hi, Angelique. Thank you.

MATHENY: And, hi, Beth. Glad you could make it today.

FRIDAY: Hi, Angelique. Thank you.

MATHENY: Theresa, why don't I let you take it from here?

KRATSCHMER: Okay, great. Thank you. Beth, my first question for you, then, is what kind of changes are you seeing in the field in terms of how people develop and deliver software as a result of what's going on economically?

FRIDAY: So, Theresa, that's a great question, and I actually have this conversation quite often now given what's happening in the world. And I think this trend was happening for a while but really accelerated quite dramatically with the economic turn.

And really what we're seeing is people are doing more with less. People are very focused on cost. They're focused on getting things done right the first time and making sure that they reduce any kind of churn or any kind of distraction within their workplace environment...

...so that they can be first to market or they can meet their clients' needs and really make sure that they're keeping the total cost of ownership around what they do and how they do it as lean and as productive as possible.

KRATSCHMER: So, Beth, can you talk to me a little bit about requirements-driven quality? Why is this relevant this year at this time?

FRIDAY: Yes, you know, honestly, requirements are the foundation for effective software delivery. You have to understand what you're going to build. Maybe you don't understand 100 percent of the requirements, but you need to understand what the requirement looks like to get off to the first right iteration.

You know, and testing plays a big part in that. So not only during the requirements process you need to understand what it is you're building, but also how are you going to test and validate what you will build will span enterprise level usage or whatever your business requirement is.

You know, the real reality here is that requirements really need to be aligned with the business strategy. Even several years ago oftentimes in many parts of the industry, software development wasn't really...from an IT perspective wasn't aligned with business strategy.

And today, those two worlds are very much coupled, business strategy along with what's being developed into the marketplace. And you need to make sure that you have those connection points. Building quality in from the beginning and making sure that you understand what you're building is really the first step in that quest.

KRATSCHMER: Absolutely. That makes a lot of sense. What

are the core capabilities that play into this, of requirements-driven quality?

FRIDAY: Oh my goodness. Best practices. And I'll tell you, when I work with clients and speak with clients, I think there's many different levels of maturity that happen in this space.

So we have best practices that are built in through our methodology, our software methodology, that allows clients to really start with the level of competency that they're at and build from there.

So, for example, today, if you were to look at the NCIF capability, which is methodology, which is really based in years of practical field experience, you can take that body of work and really look at, where do I start given where are my current capability is?

And what disciplines am I going to adopt early in my maturity process and add to over time, because what the reality is that teams mature over a course of time. You can't go in on day one and have all of the principles well defined and well executed, but it's really a system of continual improvement.

And for any teams starting off in software development or

for teams that have years of software practical experience, I would really recommend to take a look at some of the technology that's out there, in particular MCIF.

And why I like that so much is it's really a simplification, it's an adaptation really of a lot of process and a lot of practical work that has been done over the years, simplified in a way that you can take pieces of the process and adapt it for what problem you're trying to solve and where in your maturity level you are with regards to software development and delivery.

KRATSCHMER: Then, how does Rational solutions get us to the point of actually doing more with less?

FRIDAY: So more with less, I think, most simply stated, and I talk about this a lot with teams. You know, software development is a very creative discipline from the standpoint of, people have innovative ideas and they can execute to those innovative ideas and you have to save the creativity for the innovation itself and not for the process.

The process needs to be something that's very predictable. It needs to be very repeatable. It needs to be very scalable. I think oftentimes teams will place a lot of value on being creative during the process of development

and developing software.

But if there's no intrinsic value on the product that you're producing, I would say very clearly and very specifically that teams that have good discipline around their process that they use and good rigor around how they are developing software into the marketplace spend a lot less time churning and going back and relooking at things and a bit more time really being able to innovate on the actual code that's being written as opposed to the process that's being used to get the product out the door.

And I think that's where Rational tooling and methodology play a big part, because it's very difficult once the engineering teams start working with the process, it's very hard and it's very difficult, I call it a cultural change in many cases to be able to get folks to change the way they're working to being either more efficient or more predictable.

But enterprises that have a very predictable process, a very well-thought out process, have a lot of flexibility because you can move individuals from team to team and not have that learning curve, go back into a different team and have to learn a whole new process, whole new set of methodologies if you have some consistency across your enterprise.

KRATSCHMER: Right. You mentioned MCIF. What are the

Rational solutions that exist today to really help customers not only survive but thrive in this economic climate?

FRIDAY: So, you know, again, MCIF is the process piece and the tooling and solutions that we have are very complementary. One really goes hand in hand with the other.

I think that the power of the Rational tools really lies in the end-to-end capability, meaning if you start with requirements and you go all the way through to code, from an architecture, start with your requirements, make sure you have solid foundation with regards to your architecture, all your development and your codes through testing and deployment.

That end-to-end capability is really where the real value comes for our very small team to really have that process be very well defined and very visible from the time the process was thought of through its inception all the way through to its delivery.

So it's not only just the pieces of software development, and that's usually, and that's where we recommend our teams get started, because you certainly can't do everything all at once.

But the goal -- the ultimate end goal -- really is to make sure you have that end-to-end process and visibility and

traceability throughout the software development process. One of the [INAUDIBLE] capability that we really spent a lot of time on, Rational as a brand, is really looking at how do we have better reporting and better capability around the intelligence of software development.

So there's a number of solutions that we're putting together today that will allow teams to be able to see and gather metrics in a very systematic and very low overhead manner.

You know, oftentimes when I speak with teams and even my own personal experience, software development teams will spend a lot of time generating reports and calculating numbers, defect counts and whatever it might be for a certain set of deliverables...

That might be the executives or might be a person's software development process, and getting to your end-to-end process coupled with robust reporting is really, you know, at the end of the day, that's really where I see teams really saving money and starting to accelerate on all cylinders...

...because if you don't have to spend time counting things or really going back and doing inventory on things that have already been done. You can save yourself a lot of time and certainly have better intelligence to make better business decisions.

KRATSCHMER: All right. Well, thank you so much, Beth, for talking to us today. To find out more about Rational's requirements-driven quality solution, which includes Rational Requirements Composer, Rational Quality Manager, RequisitePro and DOORS, please check out our requirements-driven quality solution brief. Thanks, Angelique. Back to you.

MATHENY: Theresa and Beth, thank you so much for sharing your time today to talk about today's topic, when the going gets rough, succeed with requirements-driven quality. We really appreciate it.

FRIDAY: Thank you.

KRATSCHMER: Thank you.

MATHENY: That was Rational's Beth Friday, VP of Worldwide Client Support; and, Theresa Kratschmer, IBM's Solutions Marketing Manager.

For more information on today's topic and to go to the link that Theresa just mentioned, it's on the Rational Talks To You Podcast Page. That's www.ibm.com/rational/podcasts. You'll also find more podcasts like this one. So check it out today. This has been an IBM Rational podcast. I'm Angelique Matheny. Thanks for listening. Keep tuning in as Rational talks to you.

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