

Industry:
Business/IT application

Organization:
Spherion

Description:
Spherion® delivers recruitment, outsourcing and technology solutions that measurably enhance workplace performance.

Business Problem:
Spherion grew through mergers and acquisitions which resulted in duplicate business processes, incompatible, heterogeneous systems, increasing IT costs, and inefficient communication across systems and cultures.

Solution:
Rational ClearCase, Rational ClearQuest, Rational RequisitePro, Rational Rose, Rational Suite Enterprise, Rational Unified Process, Rational XDE Professional Java Edition

Key Benefits:
Just-in-time training increased productivity by applying newly developed skills at each phase of the development lifecycle.

Rational and IBM integrated software development tools improved team efficiency.

Following the Unified Modeling Language (UML) and creating visual models of the functional and non-function requirements:

Verified that consultants and developers were speaking the same language

Took guesswork out of interpreting iterations of the system with visual models — not reading hundreds of lines of code.

Rational® software

Rational and IBM Global Services Team to Support a Successful Business Transformation for Spherion

Integrated Tools and Timely Training Produce a 33 Percent Efficiency Increase and 400 Percent ROI for Spherion's IT Software Development Group.

Problem: Maintenance Costs, Duplicate Processes

Mergers and acquisitions typically yield tremendous business potential, but the price for this can be high: duplicate business processes, incompatible, heterogeneous systems, increasing IT costs, and inefficient communication across systems and cultures, are just some of the problems that plague organizations undergoing such changes.

This was precisely the situation for Spherion, a leader in the professional recruitment, outsourced staffing, and workplace technology solutions areas when they turned to Rational and IBM Global Services for help streamlining and integrating their multiple business systems. What this powerful vendor relationship delivered was just what Spherion had hoped for: a model business transformation solution with exceptional integrated tool support, and a unique, just-in-time training program that brought the company's IT organization up to speed in record time.

Two Vendors Team Up for Pilot Project

"Through a series of mergers and acquisitions, Spherion had become a global company with annual revenues of about 3 billion dollars per year and 1,000 offices worldwide," says Joshua Barnes, a management team member for Spherion's Application Solutions group. "Our support and maintenance costs were increasing, and our business people were burdened with duplicate and manual processes." But, changing these processes with new technologies and organizational skills, introduces a tremendous amount of risk to the business. Although the costs to maintain redundant systems that work may be high, they are predictable. If you replace these with new processes and technology, which then fail, it could seriously impact the way you service your clients, which has direct revenue implications.

To help manage risk, improve return on investment, and learn new skills, Spherion chose a pilot project to consolidate the current 23 time entry systems into one application with three interfaces (Web-based, IVR, and time clock) that could service people around the world. The success or failure of this pilot would lead the direction and funding of subsequent business transformation projects. Barnes and his IT organization chose the time entry system as a pilot project to serve three purposes:

- Provide just-in-time training in the new technologies to members of Spherion's Application Solutions group so they could contribute to the pilot project and beyond.
- Provide a model solution that could be duplicated and modified for other business processes and projects.
- Demonstrate the soundness of the technology and its business value — so management would be willing to commit resources for the business transformation effort.

The next step was to choose the systems integrator and technology vendors who had proven experience changing the way companies do business. "We needed help developing a technology solution to consolidate systems and business processes. But we also needed an integrated training strategy to bring the group up to speed on the new technology very quickly. I wanted to work a systems integrator to assume most of the system planning and development work themselves so we could smooth out our business processes quickly and cost-effectively."

Spherion's senior executive management had previously committed to using IBM hardware and development and database software as



“First we trained our project managers and team leads, then our business and systems analysts, then our developers and so on. When the project progressed into their respective functional areas, these professionals were able to put their new skills to use immediately.”

—Joshua Barnes
Application Solutions
Group Spherion

the company's new IT platform, which made IBM Global Services a logical choice for systems integration, custom application development and consulting. And because Rational Suite® Enterprise's comprehensive lifecycle development tools are fully integrated with IBM WebSphere®, Rational was selected as the platform for software development.

Just-In-Time Training: Internal Team Hits the Ground Running

Rational and IBM Global Services have both a technology and business relationship to help customers implement our combined technologies with training and consulting services. When it was time to kick off the pilot project, both IBM and Rational worked with Spherion to conduct a skills assessment of the Application Solutions group members, and then formulated a flexible training delivery plan that included custom onsite training and mentoring with Web-based and open enrollment training. The training rollout then happened in phases corresponding with the software development process. By taking the approach to train key staff members just before their participation came into play in the pilot project's lifecycle, it allowed Spherion to apply their new skills directly to the project.

Results: 400 Percent ROI and a Repeatable Process

As these team members arrived back at their workstations to apply their newly acquired skills, development for the pilot billing system project proceeded well — and managers took notice. “With Rational Suite Enterprise's integrated tool set, for the first time we could automate the entire development lifecycle — from project analysis and design to implementation, unit testing/debugging and deployment. The Suite operates seamlessly inside IBM's WebSphere Studio, so there's no time lost switching between tools and interfaces; we figure that working with Rational® XDE™ increased our implementer's efficiency by approximately 33 percent. Rational® ClearCase® allowed us to do multifaceted team development without versioning conflicts.”

But as the team transitioned from the pilot project to building new systems for other business processes, it was the powerful visual modeling capabilities embodied in Rational

XDE (eXtended Development Experience) that really helped pay for Spherion's investment four times over. “Creating models with the Unified Modeling Language (UML) allows us to represent both functional and non-functional requirements in a standard visual vernacular,” Barnes explains. “That has consistently kept our internal development team on the same page with our consultants. And as we continue to grow, new people can become productive very quickly by studying these models. Instead of struggling to understand the system's goals and corresponding requirements by looking through someone else's code, they're able to ‘get it’ immediately by looking at a picture. Based on the reports we've run, this communication capability has translated into a 400 percent ROI for my group.”

And the Rational Unified Process®, RUP®, Barnes goes on to say, provided the entire group with a repeatable process. “Our business managers recognized pretty quickly that following RUP's best practices approach, including iterative development, would enable us to consistently deliver solutions that actually met the business's needs. They also noted that RUP led us to discover and address risks much sooner in the development lifecycle, which brought down development costs,” he adds.

Relationship Promises Future Success

Today, IBM Global Services and Rational provide ongoing mentoring and support as Spherion's Application Solutions group continues to combine and streamline business systems. “We're fortunate to have partners who work in an exceptionally cooperative way with one another. Together, they help us get the tools and resources we need in order to achieve our goals,” Barnes said.

Those resources, he is quick to add, would not be forthcoming without the commitment and vision of Spherion's senior executive management. “Part of what IBM Global Services and Rational gave my team is an ability to demonstrate results quickly,” he explains. “Now, our managers have clear proof that investment in the proper tools and technologies, as well as training and mentoring, are essential to our business transformation efforts and beyond. With this ongoing relationship, I have great confidence that we'll succeed, and so do my managers.”

About Rational

Rational provides a software development platform that improves the speed, quality, and predictability of software projects. This integrated, full life-cycle solution combines software engineering best practices, market-leading tools, and professional services. Ninety-six of the Fortune 100 rely on Rational tools and services to build better software, faster. This open platform is extended by partners who provide more than 500 complementary products and services.

IBM Rational software

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