

IBM Podcast

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MATHENY: Welcome to this IBM podcast, The key to success: Accurate insight into data, processes, practices and performance. I'm Angelique Matheny with IBM. In today's challenging economic environment, businesses are faced with increased pressures to reduce overall costs and improve time to market.

Having accurate insight into enterprise data processes and practices is a key component of success; however, many organizations today suffer from a lack of visibility, especially around the software and systems lifecycle.

And joining us today is Eric Larsen, Senior Product Manager, to discuss how IBM Rational Insight helps businesses effectively measure team performance and project results to improve business outcomes. Hi, Eric, welcome to the podcast. Thanks for joining us.

LARSEN: Hello, thank you very much. Good to be here.

MATHENY: Let's start off with this: can you give us an overview of what is IBM Rational Insight?

LARSEN: Sure. IBM Rational Insight is a performance management system to help organizations take greater control of their software and systems development delivery processes.

One of the things Insight does is provides transparent visibility and control into risks, status and trends. It allows corrective actions to be taken when necessary and ensure that you're on the right course to success.

It enables organizations to essentially do what we call manage by exception: highlighting issues that require attention enabling you to drill into those issues for additional analysis.

Other things it can do, it can automate some of the typically manual error-prone tasks associated with collecting information for measurement and reporting processes. Pulls this data from real-time data sources for a deeper analysis and trending.

It can measure the effectiveness of your system and create measurements, metrics and KPIs tailored to different roles in an organization, enabling you to provide very specific, measured, actionable, relevant and timely goals. It can provide visibility into data that span projects and products across geographic boundaries to help monitor the progress

and view that in a single place.

MATHENY: Why is it so valuable to customers? What challenges does it address?

LARSEN: Today's software development environments are increasingly heterogeneous and distributed. Teams are often assembled from across the globe that are pulled together through acquisition, through pulling out resources across the enterprise, and we pull together tools from a whole different set, suite of tools sets.

Internally, within IBM, we have teams working across North America, South America, China, India and the U.K. developing our own Rational product line. As you can imagine, managing all these teams and getting status from all of them in a consistent fashion is a challenge.

And there's also a wide range of disparate tools in use. Managing the performance and health and status of these projects and programs is usually a manual, error-prone, and very time-consuming task.

What Insight can do is it can automate much of this process by automating the collection of data from these disparate data sources and presenting the resulting information in a set of dashboards and reports tailored to specific

stakeholder needs.

Why is this so important? Well, studies have shown that projects that implement a performance measurement and management system are not only much more likely to deliver their projects on time and within budget but they also experience much higher levels of customer satisfaction, as well as better team morale.

And having everybody on the project using a consistent set of measures increases the effectiveness and accuracy of the information. Providing that level of transparency enables issues to be visible early, greatly reducing the overall cost of resolving them.

Project failures are often driven by an inability to measure project performance and demonstrate an ROI on various investments. Insight really helps you get the transparency and visibility into project health, project status and ensure project success.

MATHENY: Eric, what benefits can customers expect to obtain when using IBM Rational Insight?

LARSEN: There are a number of direct and indirect benefits that customers can realize with Insight. One of them, as I talked about, is by implementing and using a

consistent measurement system, everyone in the organization can again to really trust the information being presented and ensure that that information is consistent from one project to another project.

So if I'm presenting measurements that say, you know, this team is showing a certain number of open issues or open actions or requirements and a certain status, every project is reporting in the same way. They're all treating that information the same.

Another benefit is that the overall effort of collecting that information and reporting the status can be greatly reduced. A team within IBM has begun using Insight, they've been using it for a couple of months now just for reporting the status up through their monthly operation reviews.

Once they began and started deploying Insight, that team has saved over 40 hours a month just in the effort it used to take to manually collect and collate this information for the status reporting. And that was just one small team.

Leveraging insight, organizations can begin to align their business and operational objectives with their application lifecycle measurement metrics to basically enhanced visibility and ensure that they are compliant and that they can govern their project correctly.

Teams themselves continue to focus on leveraging their tools, they can work in their ALM environment. The team themselves may be using some dashboarding or reporting that's built into that tools, but then KPI -- or, Key Performance Indicators -- can be established to measure a team's performance at the ALM level...

Those measurements can then be rolled up into dashboards and reports that help align with organizational process improvements initiatives. And then, those measurements can then be further refined and presented up at an executive dashboard level, through dashboards and scorecards that align with overall business objectives -- things like increasing customer satisfaction or cost reduction or increased market share.

MATHENY: And I can see how tracking would be important. What types of data, process and performance can I track, and how can I view those results?

LARSEN: A great question. So Rational Insight Version 1.0 can report on data from a wide range of data sources that really spans the entire lifecycle management domain, everything from requirement management to change management, configuration management, quality management, et cetera.

We have out of the box integrations with a number of Rational tools including Team Concert, Quality Manager, ClearCase, ClearQuest, RequisitePro and Task Manager as well as Microsoft Project via an XML export/import facility and Microsoft Excel.

Insight also leverages an open Restful architecture so it provides an easy extensibility point so we can integrate data from other tools as well. We can also integrate with data coming from XML or database ODBC backed data sources.

There's a large library of out of the box reports and dashboards delivered with Insight that are really based upon, you know, 10-plus years of Rational best practice guidance.

Our Version 1.0 includes measurements that are very tightly aligned with a number of Rational Method Composer or RMC best practices, including practices such as change control, change management, iterative development, requirements management and test management. And we're building out more out of the box categorizations and aligning reports with more of the practices as we go on.

In addition to these, there are a couple of new Rational Method Composer practices that were developed specifically focused on performance management and measurement. A

published version of these new practices is included out of the box of Rational Insight, and they're really tailored and geared to helping an organization establish and deploy a performance measurement system based upon Rational Insight.

The Insight reports and key performance indicators can be either targeted at polling data from live operational data sources across that whole application lifecycle management suite of tools or we can leverage a Rational Insight data warehouse technology where we extract, transform and load information periodically from many tools into our data warehouse for doing historical trending and analytics.

So there's many hours have been spent designing and developing the data warehouse schema that aligns with this software and systems development and domain. And that's one area that often consumes a large amounts of time and effort when attempting to develop that and deploy that data warehousing system in house.

Rational Insight bundles and leverages a number of other IBM technologies including DB2, WebSphere and InfoSphere Data Architect. In addition, we are bundled and based upon the industry-leading Cognos 8.4 BI reporting platform. That really enables us to leverage the deep analytical power of that platform in the enterprise scalability, and it doesn't stop there.

Customers can achieve even greater value by leveraging additional Cognos components. We're layered upon this Cognos platform so we have access to and customers upgrade to and gain additional value out of tools like the Cognos Go! dashboard, office and mobile applications allowing a very deep integration with some of the Microsoft Office tools allowing delivery of information to mobile devices. You can also layer upon some of the additional deeper analytical capabilities with things like Analyst Studio, Event Studio and Metric Studio.

The projects I listed earlier are just the beginning; we're continuing to aggressively focus on extending the reach of insight into most or all of the Rational and Telelogic tools as well and building out integrations to many third-party products.

MATHENY: Now, Eric, our last question today: how can I improve my business outcomes based on all this information?

LARSEN: That's another great question. With so many disparate data sources and geographically distributed teams typically involved in a software and systems development project, there are inherent blind spots into that whole process. Development organizations may lack visibility into what the business operational initiatives are that are

driving their goals and objectives. This can cause them to make decisions that are not necessarily aligned with the strategic business goals.

Executives, on the other hand, may not have visibility into what the teams are doing in their ability to deliver on these goals and objectives, and may not discover issues and trends until they're very costly to repair and can generate customer satisfaction issue.

We often say that you cannot improve what you're not measuring. However, simply taking measurements is often not enough; organizations need to be able to compare the performance of projects from a release to release or from program to program. And to make these comparisons meaningful, a consistent objective measurement system is required.

IBM Rational Insight enables organizations to establish a performance management system that can be used across portfolios, projects and programs. These objective measurements can be leveraged throughout the organization and all stakeholders have on demand access to up to date information that's required to make accurate and informed business decisions. With IBM's Rational Insight, you can start measuring and stop guessing.

MATHENY: Eric, thanks so much for sharing your time today to discuss the key to success, accurate insight into data processes, practices and performance. We really appreciate it.

LARSEN: You're very welcome. Thank you very much.

MATHENY: That was Rational's Eric Larsen, Senior Product Manger for IBM Rational Insight. Eric mentioned blind spots just a few seconds ago; there's a Webcast that might be of interest to you to support today's topic. It's titled, Are You Making The Best Decisions For Your Organization, Make Better Decisions by Overcoming Information Blind Spots.

You'll find a link on the podcast page, so if you're interested in more podcasts like this one and to find the link, check out the Rational Talks to You podcast page at www.ibm.com/rational/podcasts.

This has been an IBM podcast. I'm Angelique Matheny. Thanks for listening. Keep tuning in as Rational Talks to You.

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