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THE OPEN ALM COMPANY

Travel Guard International

FAST FACTS

Company

Travel Guard International is the industry's leading provider of travel insurance plans—covering more than 6 million travelers worldwide each year. www.travelguard.com.

Industry

Financial Services

Geography

US

Challenges

- n Increase visibility and predictability in the software delivery process
- n Create efficiencies through improved resource management
- n Improve customer satisfaction

Solution

- n Borland® Tempo™
- n Borland® SilkTest®

Results

- n Increased visibility, predictability and communication
- n 15% improvement in development efficiency
- n Enhanced credibility and customer satisfaction

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Travel Guard International (www.travelguard.com) is the industry's leading provider of travel insurance and emergency travel assistance—covering more than 8 million travelers worldwide each year. Today, the majority of Travel Guard's sales are via the Internet. Since Travel Guard attains much of its differentiation by effectively leveraging its IT resources to provide superior customer service, the company undertook a significant IT management and governance process improvement initiative, with the goal of standardizing on new processes and technology to improve IT predictability. Travel Guard selected Borland® Tempo™, the cornerstone of the Borland IT Management & Governance (ITM&G) solution, because it provided a robust solution for portfolio management, scheduling and time tracking. Today, Borland® Tempo™ has helped Travel Guard significantly reallocate its development time and resources—from spending 90% of resource time on application maintenance and enhancements to spending 90% on strategic and related requests.

COMPANY

Travel Guard International is the industry's leading provider of travel insurance plans—covering more than 8 million travelers worldwide each year. Its travel insurance plans offer coverage for vacation and trip cancellation, travel interruptions and delays, emergency medical and health expenses, lost baggage and more. Travel Guard is a wholly owned subsidiary of AIG Travel Services, Inc., a member company of American International Group, Inc., world leaders in insurance and financial services with operations in more than 130 countries and jurisdictions.

CHALLENGES

Companies differentiate themselves by the levels of service they provide to customers. Few companies are more committed to serving their customers than Travel Guard, whose website received top five honors from Travel Weekly magazine in 2005. The company markets its products direct to consumers through its fully transactional website (www.travelguard.com), a network of more than 14,000 agents and nearly 500 travel suppliers in the United States and Canada. It performs the administration, claims and sales support and customer service functions for its travel insurance services. It also owns and operates its own international travel medical and travel assistance operations. Travel Guard attains much of its differentiation by effectively leveraging its IT resources to provide superior customer service, which is what led the company to undertake a significant process improvement initiative around IT management and governance. The initiative, which encompassed both defining processes and automating them with technology, would enable the company to:

Increase visibility and predictability in the software delivery process

With the majority of Travel Guard's sales generated via the Internet, the company understood that IT was a critical component of its business, yet the company did not have adequate IT management and governance processes in place to meet the growing demand for its IT services. For example, priorities and approval processes were not always consistent;— some projects went all the way to executive management for approval, while others that may have carried equal importance, did not. In addition, the Travel Guard software development team was bogged down in maintaining and enhancing existing software applications, spending 80-90% of its time on small, maintenance and enhancement requests rather than strategic projects, due in large part to its governance processes.

“Our goal was to implement a complete project and portfolio management solution, including addressing three critical areas of need for us—portfolio management, scheduling and time tracking—and Borland Tempo fit in very well with that goal.”

— Tim Norton, PMO Manager, Travel Guard

To address its governance issues, Travel Guard established a Project Management Office (PMO) to standardize and document new IT management and governance policies and procedures, and at the same time looked for a solution that would most effectively automate and enforce these new processes.

Create efficiencies through improved resource management

For some time, Travel Guard had a list of identified strategic projects that if accomplished, would provide great benefit to the company. One such project was developing a content management system to automate minor website change requests. However, the company was unable to get these strategic projects started and/or completed because its IT resources were bogged down with “putting out fires” and “quick fixes” that provided temporary solutions. Travel Guard IT management sought a solution that would allow it to effectively manage schedules and time tracking in an effort to help teams move away from weekly releases and take a more strategic approach that would create long-term business efficiencies.

In addition, the two Travel Guard development teams—the back-office developers and the web developers—had standardized on different processes and different in-house developed project tracking systems, but neither system had effective scheduling built-in and only one had any time tracking capabilities. This led to significant variations in schedules for tasks to be accomplished. In order to increase its development team productivity and meet its strategic goals, the company sought an integrated IT management and governance solution that included a central repository for scheduling all project activities and that would track developers’ time, so actual time spent could be compared against estimated development times to improve resource utilization.

Increase customer satisfaction

Travel Guard’s products are sold by travel agencies nation wide. Using the company’s AgentLink application, Travel Guard’s network of travel agents can directly log in and purchase the Travel Guard insurance products they are authorized to sell.

When an agent would submit a change request for AgentLink, they would call to check the status of the request because they were unable to run reports or communicate on change requests without communicating with someone directly. This was inefficient for both parties. Travel Guard sought a comprehensive solution with integrated time tracking and scheduling that would enable the company to improve visibility and better set project estimate expectations with customers.

SOLUTION

Travel Guard selected Borland® Tempo™, the cornerstone of the Borland IT Management & Governance (ITM&G) solution, after reviewing a number of IT governance and project and portfolio management solutions.

“Our goal was to implement a complete project and portfolio management solution, including addressing three critical areas of need for us—portfolio management, scheduling and time tracking—and Borland Tempo fit in very well with that goal,” explained Tim Norton, Travel Guard’s PMO manager.

“Another attractive feature of Borland Tempo was the ability for the tool to support the governance processes we had already established,” added Jason Schilling, senior software architect at Travel Guard. “Today, within Borland Tempo, we are able to drive a project through various stages, as well as drive appropriate actions that need to happen at each of the stages.”

Travel Guard IT management categorizes project requests by estimated scope and number of work hours to accomplish the task. At a high-level, projects are broken into three tiers:

- Fewer than 100 hours: typically change requests and maintenance activities that require little approval to be scheduled
- Between 100 and 1,000 hours: typically medium-sized projects, such as product revisions, that require additional authorization to be scheduled
- More than 1,000 hours: typically strategic, enterprise-wide projects, such as redesigns, that require executive approval

Travel Guard International

According to Shilling, “Implementing our governance processes with Borland Tempo has enabled us to shift our IT resource allocation to focus on more strategic activities. Prior to implementing Tempo, 90% of our IT resources were committed to maintenance activities. Currently, 90% of our IT resources are committed to strategic projects.”

Today, Travel Guard has deployed Borland Tempo to help the company increase efficiencies by addressing critical process areas within IT management and governance including, demand, portfolio, project and program, resource and financial management.

In the past, managing demand for IT resources was a problem for Travel Guard. For example, prior to implementing Borland Tempo, Travel Guard project managers kept a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to manage upwards of 100 projects. On a weekly or bi-weekly basis, program managers and department champions attended meetings to prioritize projects on the spreadsheet, which was inefficient and unproductive. This inability to appropriately prioritize projects resulted in little or no prioritization at all. Ultimately, every project was deemed important creating a burden on resources.

With Borland Tempo, the company has standardized on a formal, documented request process that is automated and enforced. Borland Tempo ensures more comprehensive criteria is gathered up front for change requests, so the team can speed approval cycles and make collaborative, fact-based decisions about which projects and investments to undertake. In one particular case, a program manager was able to reduce the number of projects she was managing by 60%, just by using Borland Tempo to eliminate duplications and prioritize the projects.

“From an IT perspective, we are in better control of our request management processes now,” said Norton. “Before, we lacked justification to say ‘no’ to a project. With Borland Tempo, for projects of all sizes, we now have an automated review process allowing us to determine if the project makes sense at all or if it should be combined with another request. This is a major improvement.”

In addition, with Borland Tempo, Travel Guard has gained a complete set of resource management capabilities, including a centralized repository for all scheduling activities and timesheet tracking for actual time spent. This helps teams know at an enterprise, team, and individual level who is working on what projects and capacity for proposed projects.

“Scheduling has traditionally been very difficult for us because our request management processes and time tracking capabili-

ties were extremely limited,” said Norton. “With Borland Tempo, we are able to eliminate blanks in developers’ schedules resulting from too much time allotted to a project, and make developers more productive.”

The Travel Guard release process and documentation has now been incorporated into Borland Tempo to support new IT Project and Program Management processes, and the entire portfolio of projects is trackable for the first time, enabling the company to collaboratively evaluate projects by priorities. In addition, Travel Guard is using Borland Tempo’s Financial Management capabilities for rolling out new cost/benefit analysis procedures.

According to Norton, one of the biggest benefits of Borland Tempo is that it provides Travel Guard with the flexibility to take a large project and run it through a more rigorous governance process, while at the same time effectively handling small, maintenance or tactical projects by routing them through an appropriate process quickly and immediately onto someone’s calendar. The systems’ inherent capabilities, such as the ability to serve as a repository for documentation, also help the company meet compliance requirements.

Travel Guard is also leveraging Borland® SilkTest®, the leading automated tool for testing the functionality of enterprise software applications in any environment, for automated functional software testing.

RESULTS

Travel Guard relies on the Borland IT Management and Governance solution to automate and manage its critical process areas in IT management and governance.

Increased visibility, predictability and communication

Prior to implementing Borland Tempo and new governance processes, internal customers would call on a frequent basis to know the status of projects and often felt the scheduling did not effectively address their needs. This has been greatly reduced, according to Norton. “We now have reporting available to help customers understand where the schedule sits, and part of that is understanding the duration of projects—whether they are days, weeks or months,” he said. “Now, our internal champions have visibility into schedules, which improves communication between our business champions and our external customers.

“Another attractive feature of Borland Tempo was the ability for the tool to support the governance processes we had already established. Today, within Borland Tempo, we are able to drive a project through various stages, as well as drive appropriate actions that need to happen at each of the stages.”

— Jason Schilling, Senior Software Architect, Travel Guard

15% improvement in development efficiency

The scheduling and time tracking capabilities within Borland Tempo have increased the productivity of Travel Guard’s development team by forcing project start and end dates. With assigned projects, developers can see their queues are full for the coming weeks, which has significantly reduced the number of projects that remain unfinished. “I would estimate that we are about 15% more efficient in our development areas because of the scheduling,” explained Norton.

Enhanced credibility and customer satisfaction

Borland Tempo has provided Travel Guard with the ability to automate its full governance policies and procedures and be able to effectively communicate them throughout the company. Before Borland Tempo, teams made requests and when they asked when they would be done, IT responded with a best-guess estimate. Now, a request comes in and a requestor can see in Borland Tempo where their request is in the process and if it has been scheduled for a particular date. “The credibility Borland Tempo brings has not only helped us manage small projects, but also helped us tremendously in being able to allocate and focus time on the strategic projects that will end up reducing the number of requests and saving everyone effort and work in the long run,” concluded Schilling.

Borland is the leading vendor of Open Application Lifecycle Management (ALM) solutions - open to customers’ processes, tools and platforms - providing the flexibility to manage, measure and improve the software delivery process.