

xProcess pays off for iiPAY

Global payroll solutions business streamlines and shortens its product development lifecycle with help from Ivis' xProcess.

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- John Andrews, Head of Project Support, iiPAY

Overview

iiPAY is a global provider of payroll calculation and management systems with offices in the US and UK. The Company has developed powerful internet based technology that enables the quick and easy management of any number of complex payrolls under any rules, for just one, or any number of countries and on any platform. iiPAY solves complicated, complex and non-standard payroll problems, presenting a whole new way of paying large or small numbers of people both domestically and across the globe.

When iiPAY needed assistance in implementing a project management process for its product development lifecycle, it turned to Ivis Technologies' xProcess process and project management software for a swift and elegant solution.

Background

As a global provider of payroll calculation and management systems, iiPAY works in a fast paced, constantly changing environment, managing not only the next phase of its own products but also projects on behalf of its clients.

iiPAY's software development process has traditionally been self managed using best principles in an informal way. This approach was not coping well with multiple sources of requirements and targets. The team of 6 developers and 1 business analyst recognized this shortfall and the need for stronger project management. Development and delivery times of existing projects were difficult to predict and therefore taking longer to complete than anticipated.

In order to allow the development teams to focus on development rather than the management of the project, John Andrews was hired as Head of Project Support. One of his first tasks was to

introduce some project management processes and tools to assist the team throughout the development lifecycle.

The Selection Process

Since iiPAY had no preconceived ideas as to the type of project management software needed, it presented John with a blank page. He started out by spending time understanding how the team works and what their key requirements were. This approach resulted in a needs analysis report which was used as the blue print for selecting an appropriate solution. The top 3 requirements were: -

1. Find a tool that works in the agile manner that iiPAY works rather than dictating particular working practises, and one that suits our development environment rather than taking over the environment.
2. Find a multi user tool that won't take too much time to use (after all developers need to spend time developing not trying to figure out how to use and complete project management tools!). There is an expectation that a developer will use the tool for just a short time on a daily basis to plan their work.
3. Find a cost effective solution that has a reasonable 'per user' fee.

There are many project management solutions available on the market today and iiPAY looked at many including MS Project (and MS Project Central), xPlanner, SharedPlan, xProcess and a number of OpenSource collaborative planning tools such as Tutos.

Many of these tools were quickly discarded due to not meeting the top three criteria. For example Microsoft Project, although a well featured project management tool, is expensive not only in purchase cost but also to be effective, in the continual work that is needed by planners to maintain the plan and keep it in touch with reality. Some of the OpenSource tools available although low cost (often no purchase cost), do not support collaborative work or did not match the working methods at iiPAY.

After a thorough review of the market, xProcess was finally selected. It met the 3 key requirements the most closely, providing a very flexible and intuitive working environment, and support from Ivis during the trial (and consequently after the purchase) was exceptional. John Andrews commented *'xProcess allows us to focus on what we do best: develop - whilst providing us with a platform*

for planning and anticipating the effects of change. Not only is it easy to use but easy to reuse past project plans as templates for future projects. This is a big bonus and is saving us untold amounts of planning time.'

Implementation begins

Ivis offers a free download of xProcess so this made it easy for iiPAY to evaluate the tool against requirements (although at that time the free download provided only a single-user license, which gave the team only part of the picture). The free evaluation version now provides team licenses and John agrees this would have helped had it been available for their evaluation. John was able to elicit feedback from various team members who trialled the software. One major selling point for many of the developers was that the tool was clearly developed by software developers who had similar issues to iiPAY's teams. Therefore the lexicon that xProcess uses and the process it takes the iiPAY users through is one that they could easily relate to and adopt. This ease of use is crucial since the developers need to spend minimal time planning: entering info into the tool and interpreting data out of the tool, and maximum time actually programming.

John commented, 'I think if we were to develop a project/process management tool from scratch, it would turn out very similar to xProcess. This speaks volumes for how impressed we have been with xProcess.' He added, *'Combine this with the excellent service levels we have received from Ivis and we are very confident we have made the right choice, both for current and future projects.'*

Following this period of evaluation, iiPAY purchased one enterprise license for the planner and participant licenses for all the development team.

Installing the software was straight forward for iiPAY, even though they opted to host the Subversion server behind xProcess on their own machines rather than using a hosting partner. With all the team motivated to use xProcess, having been sold on the idea of it giving them each control on what they do on a day-to-day basis, John and the team were able to quickly start seeing the benefits of its adoption. For those involved in planning, xProcess's priority driven planning algorithm allows the effects of business decisions to be rapidly investigated.

Currently the entire iiPAY development team is using xProcess to assist with the planning and implementation of the next version of their International Payroll System. xProcess is also being used to

rapidly plan deployment of sets of plug-in modules which contain different rule sets for countries around the world (for local income tax, national insurance, differing payroll laws etc.)

The future

xProcess has helped iiPAY get its software development processes & procedures under control. It now plans to use xProcess for all development lifecycle planning; from analysis, to design and production. Future plans for iiPAY may include moving its testing function offshore and xProcess will be ideal for helping co-ordinate disparate teams.

Andrews summarized the benefits: *'Without xProcess we couldn't get a clear view of what a project's schedule looks like, what impact a change would have on that project and consequently we couldn't know what we could promise clients (both internal and external).*

Whilst many planning tools would enable us to gain this clearer view, what really stands xProcess apart is its pattern template capability. This allows us to create a project plan for one project, for example a New Zealand National Insurance module, and if we had to produce a similar module in Australia, we could use the same National Insurance pattern template which gives us a much higher starting point (with more similarities than differences) and consequently saves untold amounts of time. This approach also provides us with more accurate and realistic planning information because the reused pattern template is based on a real project with real data. This is a very powerful and unique function that makes our application development more predictable and will assist in our ever more rapid application development and deployment plans.'

About xProcess

xProcess provides a versioned, integrated and accessible environment that maximizes project agility, improves a company's processes, manages assets and optimizes resource management.

Projects change rapidly. xProcess specifically addresses the dynamic nature of project implementation. This is different from the static-based, specification-only tools available from other vendors. xProcess helps teams drive projects from inception to successful completion.

xProcess features:

- Capture the structure and typical task patterns of your projects in customized process definitions.

- Generate project plans from standard or customized processes.
- Track a project's progress, optimize resource use, and continually highlight the gap between forecast and target dates, incorporating real-time feedback into the project plan on a day-to-day basis.
- Capture resource utilisation and costs day by day.
- Maximize what is most important and beneficial for a project within a given set of resource constraints.
- Effectively manage the estimated risks during the development process.
- Define target dates for tasks, groups of tasks and projects (or import these dates from Microsoft® Project) and monitor

About Ivis

Ivis Technologies is a leading provider of software solutions that enable organisations to merge process improvement with live project execution. In an increasingly competitive and evolving market place, organisations that optimize their processes and make the best use of resources, benefit with increased efficiency and productivity. At Ivis Technologies, our focus is on the development of technology that enables organisations to do just that.

Ivis developed xProcess in order to help organisations to be more efficient, productive and agile. It's an environment that brings together process management with project planning, forecasting and execution. Although conceived to address the issues associated with agile software development, xProcess is an asset within any organisation, where skilled professionals collaborate to fulfil complex goals and where there is a need to optimize plans, improve processes and manage resources.

Founded in 2002, Ivis Technologies' products have been adopted by leading organisations in several industries. Ivis Technologies is headquartered in Phoenix, AZ with additional offices in Southampton, UK