



BOSTON - LONDON - ZURICH

Prototype to Product – Passion to Process

CASE STUDY – CEQD1

Service:

Independent Verification & Validation (IVV) of Product Development Initiative

Client:

Start-up Emerging Technology Product Company requiring transition from prototype development to enterprise-strength product.

Background:

Company had built a prototype of its proprietary database concept to prove its technology, generate market interest and identify and secure funding opportunities.

Situation:

Semaphore had originally been contracted by client to provide high-level oversight of the team selected to build a prototype version of the software. Objectives accomplished during this period included a successful prototype as well as a foundation for converting the developed technology and the organization to a quality-based product development organization.

Semaphore was then requested to lead the conversion activities while optimizing development effort within defined budget and timeframes. In addition, market feedback introduced significant enhancement requests in product feature, deployment and integration areas.

Scope:

Staffing: 56 person days over a 26 week period (1 resource)

Deliverable: documented processes and resulting artifacts, a version 1 product currently installed at multiple beta client sites.

Discovery:

Semaphore, understanding the makeup of the current team and existing working conditions, began introducing processes across the organization in an iterative and incremental fashion. Deploying a complete process on 'day one' would have crippled development and was not an option as deliverables had been committed to alpha client sites.

The team needed to convert from a 'free lance' development mode to a defined development process that included both new development as well as issue resolution of client activities. A separate but integrated set of activities were identified to add 'product level' features to the technology (end user documentation, installation/deployment artifacts, etc).

With the exception of unit testing, all Quality Assurance activities were detached from the development team and assigned to a separate group dedicated to testing including the development of a regression test suite.

Build and deployment processes were defined in detail to assure content and quality of deliverables to clients. An issue tracking system was put in place. In addition, reporting and communication practices were delineated to optimize information flow.

Semaphore continuously championed the introduction and enhancement of the processes defined; served as a mentor to key staff and outside vendors; and acted as project advocate to minimize distraction, optimize learning curve and maximize developed artifacts output.

Results:

1. Development schedules were more consistently met and deliverable contents were of higher quality.
2. Time allocated to pure development increased as the new processes alleviated redundant effort and improved communication among team members.
3. Client alpha activities moved forward as tangible improvements in productization features were added to the technology.
4. New enhancement requests and respective priorities were factored in with current activities to determine impact allowing for well-informed business decisions.
5. The completed effort was the linchpin to securing substantial outside funding.
6. Version 1.0 of the product was completed and development activities on version 1.1 began.