CASE STUDY
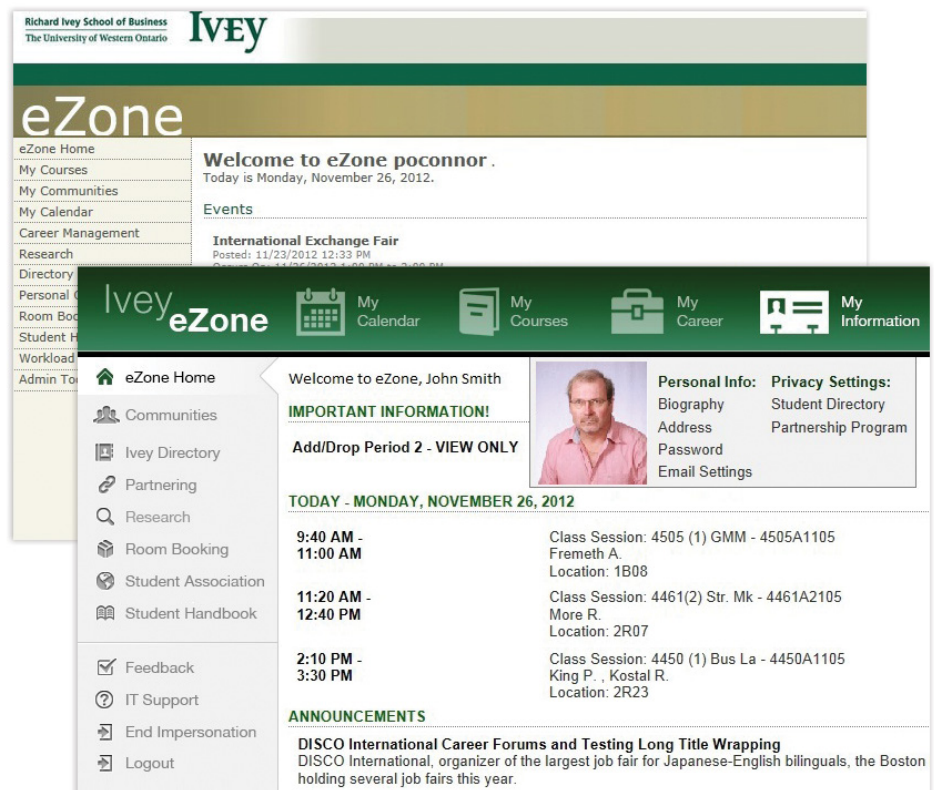
Ivey Business School – how Telerik products accelerated mission-critical projects and revolutionized application development

IVEY
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WESTERN UNIVERSITY · CANADA

http://www.ivey.uwo.ca

OVERVIEW

COUNTRY
Canada

SECTOR
Education

CUSTOMER PROFILE
The Ivey Business School is one of the world's leading providers of business education.

BUSINESS SITUATION
With mission-critical applications to update and maintain, the School's IS team needed a toolkit which would increase developer productivity and free the team to focus on meeting the expectations of students, faculty and staff.

SOLUTION
Using DevCraft by Telerik, the team was able to significantly reduce development times and adopt agile development practices, enabling them to create innovative new applications for desktop, mobile and web.

BENEFITS
• Accelerated application development cycle
• Better application design development with elimination of change requests
• Individual developer productivity gains

> " The fact we were using Telerik products made a huge difference. We were up and running in an unbelievably short time."
>
> Peter O'Connor, Senior Programmer Analyst, Ivey Business School

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BACKGROUND

The Ivey Business School – part of the Western University, Canada – is a respected business school, consistently ranking highly in international business education surveys. With three campuses – London and Toronto in Ontario and Hong Kong in China – and more than 1,700 students and teaching staff, effective data management is essential to its daily running. The School develops its own data management systems in-house. This approach enables solutions to be tailored to the school's specific needs. It also means that the School's Information Services (IS) team has to execute projects as efficiently as possible. "Our customers are the students, faculty and staff," says Peter O'Connor, Senior Programmer Analyst at the Ivey Business School. "While it might look as though we have a captive market, nothing could be further from the truth. The School depends on our systems to provide the high quality education that our students expect, so every project has to deliver a high quality product, on time and on budget. This means we are continuously searching for ways to optimize the productivity of our development team."

THE CHALLENGE

Updating the School's information infrastructure is a continuous process, with the IS team working to migrate legacy applications to .NET. Among these are critical systems including the Workload Planning application which allocates faculty to lecture courses, the Research and Development application which manages the School's research

programs and IRIS, the student registration system which manages data about every student enrolled at the School.

Naturally, a key objective for each project has been to equip the application with a modern interface which meets the expectations of students and staff. However, although .NET naturally lends itself to developing a rich user experience, the IS team found themselves increasingly frustrated by having to repeat tasks.

"We found ourselves wasting a lot of time writing similar functionality over and over," says Peter. "For example, we were writing functionality to sort, page and filter data grids again and again in different applications."

The team also needed a more efficient way to develop the data layer. The School's applications are data-heavy, and the legacy applications depended on large numbers of stored procedures and complex logic. Replicating and improving this functionality was time-consuming. Worse, time spent on the data layer was time that could have been better spent on improving the business logic.

THE SOLUTION

After evaluating third party UI components from a number of vendors, the IS team chose Telerik. "We had tried off the shelf software before, but we were never happy with the results," says Peter. "The Telerik products were different. They are powerful and easy to use, and we immediately saw gains in productivity and product quality."

OPENACCESS: HOW THE TECHNOLOGY DELIVERS

OpenAccess ORM is Telerik's free object-relational mapping tool that generates the data access layer for your applications with just a few mouse clicks.

OpenAccess works equally well in all .NET platforms. It provides integration with WCF Ria Services, WCF Data Services, and more. It also integrates well with all Telerik developer tools and controls.

The powerful OpenAccess Visual Entity Designer provides click-only model creation and drag & drop object-to-tables mapping. Based on your model, the tool instantly generates the data access code of your application, which can then be tweaked and fine-tuned.

OpenAccess supports more than 12 databases, including SQL Server, Oracle and MySQL. You can map classes to Views, Tables, and Stored Procedures. The Stored Procedure Editor simplifies the setup and usage of stored procedures. OpenAccess ORM allows you to seamlessly create database-independent code in case you decide to change the data store later on.

Best of all, OpenAccess comes with Telerik's legendary support, new updates three times a year and resources that include best practices demos with integrated unit tests, constantly updated examples in C# and Visual Basic, getting started videos and code walkthroughs.

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The team used the RadControls for ASP.NET AJAX to build the new generation Workload Planning application. This was redesigned to provide a dashboard-style overview of the planning process for senior management as well as delivering improvements throughout the user interface. The team made heavy use of RadGrid for the data display as well as data entry tools such as the RadDatePicker and RadTextBox.

"The Telerik controls have useful features such as the empty message property in the RadTextBox, which saves us having to write our own," says Peter. "Our policy is to fall back on the standard toolbox if we can't find a Telerik control that meets our needs. I can't think of an instance where we have had to do that."

Telerik's wide coverage of Microsoft technologies is also a benefit to the team. In addition to the RadControls for ASP.NET AJAX, the team is using Kendo UI for the new version of the 'eZone' web portal for students, prospective students, faculty and staff.

"We will be using Kendo UI to provide a cross-platform, cross-browser experience that students will recognize, with mobile support and responsive design. Students are technologically savvy – they have every kind of device and their expectations are high. Kendo UI will enable us to satisfy these expectations."

More than UI controls

While the Telerik UI controls boosted productivity, the real benefits came when the team started exploring the rest of the DevCraft suite. In particular, the OpenAccess ORM

(object relational mapping) tool has helped change the way the team works.

"OpenAccess is my favorite tool," says Peter. "It has saved us a ton of time. With OpenAccess, we don't have to rewrite the data layer, all the stored procedures. We went from writing stored procedures to fluent writing of queries in LINQ. It now takes us a fraction of the time to build applications. When we started using OpenAccess, we cut our development time by two thirds."

At the strategic level, OpenAccess is flexible enough to support different development approaches. "Our preferred strategy is model-first, but for some projects we have gone data-first where the data already exists. OpenAccess worked very well with both strategies."

At the operational level, OpenAccess supported the team's move to Agile development practices. "OpenAccess means we can operate in two-week sprints, even with our data-heavy applications. We can build a portion, put it in front of a user or a business analyst, and respond to their input. We're able to react in mid-stream and turn around a better product than the one we would have otherwise built."

Telerik products have also brought benefits at the individual developer level. JustCode (part of the Just series of developer productivity tools) has accelerated refactoring while JustMock has opened up the opportunity to move towards a test-driven approach to development.

The team is also using other Telerik products such as Telerik Reporting and Telerik Test Studio for functional testing.

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THE RESULT

For the Ivey Business School, the experience of adopting the full suite of Telerik products has been one of progressive improvement in developer productivity, both at the team and individual developer levels.

"We were first introduced to Telerik, like many I'm sure, through the RadGrid," says Chris Gagne, formerly Software Development Manager at the Ivey Business School. "From there we decided to try out the rest of the RadControls, immediately gaining benefit in both productivity and presentation. We then moved to the DevCraft Complete collection to make use of other control suites, reporting tools and code quality/refactoring tools. But we weren't quite finished yet! Lastly we upgraded to DevCraft Ultimate to get our hands on the mocking framework."

Peter O'Connor agrees and points to the team's experience working on the new version of the Research and Development application. The application tracks research activity carried out by Ivey faculty and is critical to the School achieving the academic recognition it deserves.

"When we worked R&D, the fact we were using Telerik products made a huge difference. We were up and running in an unbelievably short time. Business users and analysts were floored. They couldn't see what was under the lid, but they could see how excited the developers were and they could see all the new functionality."

For end users, using OpenAccess meant that data could be presented in many different ways, at minimal development cost. This approach was vindicated when the application shipped, as there were virtually no change requirements.

THE VERDICT

"OpenAccess is integral to our application cycle," says Peter. "We love getting rid of code and we want to eliminate stored procedures from our entire application stack. We had 1600 stored procedures in one of our databases – we have already removed 1000 of them!"

The next big project for the team is IRIS – the registration system for all Ivey students. "It is unthinkable that we won't be using the RadControls," says Peter. "We will be using the RadControls for years to come."

ABOUT THE IVEY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Renowned for "Case-Method Learning," The Ivey Business School is the second largest producer of business cases next to Harvard and the world's leading provider of Asian business cases. Ivey offers world-renowned undergraduate and graduate degree programs as well as Executive Development at campuses in London (Ontario), Toronto and Hong Kong. Ivey Business School has earned an international reputation for its teaching and research excellence and the high caliber of its students and faculty.

ABOUT DEVCRAFT BY TELERIK

The DevCraft collections include all Telerik developer tools – from UI components, to data access, reporting and code improvement. A DevCraft bundle is the perfect companion in the journey to become a better software craftsman and create powerful web, mobile and desktop applications.

DevCraft UI provides all Telerik's UI controls: RadControls for ASP.NET AJAX, Silverlight, WPF, WinForms, Windows Phone and Kendo UI Complete for ASP.NET MVC, plus Priority Support.

DevCraft Complete adds: Telerik Reporting, OpenAccess ORM, JustCode, JustTrace, JustDecompile and JustMock.

DevCraft Ultimate adds Ultimate Support for all the products: free updates for 1-year or more, unlimited web portal support, unlimited phone assistance, remote web assistance, issue escalation, and ticket pre-screening within 4 hours.

The DevCraft bundles, DevCraft Complete and DevCraft Ultimate replace the former Telerik Premium and Ultimate Collections, respectively.

ABOUT TELERIK

Telerik is the market-leading provider of end-to-end solutions for application development, automated software testing, agile project management, reporting, and content management across all major Microsoft development platforms. Telerik is trusted by more than 100,000 customers worldwide for its innovation and industry-best technical support.

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