Customer Story

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Paymetric Finds Success in Simplicity

by Allan McNaughton

Fast, efficient electronic-payment authorization is the lifeblood of today's plastic-dominated society. One online purchase transaction or a simple card swipe causes a cascade of complex actions to occur—banks must be contacted, authorization codes must be received, and funds must be transferred. And it all needs to happen in a timely manner lest the customer take his business elsewhere.

To support this chain of events, many companies have turned to Paymetric® for its electronic-payment solutions. Paymetric's XiPay™ Server efficiently handles all aspects of automated payment processing, from managing credit cards, debit cards, electronic checks, and so on to interfacing with major card processors and banks. With clients including Fortune 500 companies such as Colgate-Palmolive, Lennox, NetIQ, Hasbro, Kohler and Moen, XiPay Server has achieved much in a competitive market.

Growing Pains

In many ways, XiPay Server's success is the result of Paymetric's technical team working hard and fast to meet the ever-expanding needs of its customer base. With financial transactions, expectations are often high. Clients expect XiPay Server to provide a rich array of capabilities along with the highest levels of reliability and performance—nearly 50,000 transactions per day are common. Adding to the complexity of implementation, XiPay Server must incorporate financial-grade security and encryption measures, as well as seamlessly integrate with dozens of leading enterprise applications such as SAP® R/3® and SAP® CRM®.

As the code base supporting XiPay Server's expansive feature set increased, Paymetric's engineers faced new problems with their development tools. "Our code base was fairly small when we began working on XiPay Server," said David Mytchak, lead software architect. "From 1998 to 2001 we used Microsoft's source code product with a homegrown bug tracker. As our product grew to more than 4,000 files, we ran into problems. Our existing solution was painfully slow as it did not scale well and building custom development tools was not a good use of our time."

Not so Clear

Looking to upgrade its tools, Paymetric adopted Rational Software's ClearCase for configuration management and ClearQuest for bug tracking. "On the surface, ClearCase seemed like a great fit; it had almost every esoteric feature a developer could want. Unfortunately, the complexity of these tools diminished our team's productivity as we spent too much time on source-code management, not the code itself. Also, we could not get the tools to work as expected. We were never sure whether our source files got promoted correctly to the appropriate branch, so we could not guarantee what was in each build. Plus, simply trying to add a few fields to the bug tracking system required reading reams of documentation or attending an expensive training class."

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After nine months of hard effort, the Paymetric team decided to find a simpler, more productive configuration management and bug tracking solution. The engineers focused intently on finding a package that would be a good fit with how they actually develop software.

Back to Sanity

The team's search for the elusive combination of features, ease of use, and value soon led to Seapine Software. "We looked at Seapine's configuration management and bug tracking solution, Surround SCM and TestTrack Pro. The difference was like night and day compared with other products. The Seapine tools work as advertised, with no fuss. They don't have the most elaborate features that marketers invent, but they do have everything we actually need—and at a very reasonable price.

"The tools were very simple to set up and use," Mytchak continued. "We started using Surround SCM without any customization. Developers can create their own branches easily—no administrator is required. Because every activity in our development process is triggered by a defect, we utilize Surround SCM's integration with TestTrack Pro and Microsoft's Visual Studio IDE. When developers check in their work from Visual

Studio, they simply link the modified files back to the originating defect so we have a complete historical record of all changes.

"It was also simple to set up TestTrack Pro for our environment. As installed, the product captured about 90% of the information we were looking for. Unlike other products we had used, with TestTrack Pro we added custom fields and modified the workflow without reading the manual. Since we made the switch, our developers and quality assurance team are even more productive."

Paymetric's technical team members, who sometimes work from their homes or on the road, reaped further benefits from Surround SCM and TestTrack Pro's true client/server design. Mytchak noted, "We've used other development tools over the virtual private network that were incredibly slow. However, Seapine's tools are amazingly fast when used remotely. Our developers found this to be a real timesaver—fixing a critical bug from home sure beats driving into the office."

Value Conscious

In a time of tightening budgets, Paymetric also was looking to bring its development costs under control. "Our CFO was extremely pleased that we found Seapine. Our team acquired a full set of licenses for Surround SCM and TestTrack Pro for less than the annual cost of Rational's maintenance fees. To top it off, Seapine has been very responsive to any minor problems or questions we've had. Although software is never perfect, Seapine doesn't try to hide a problem. The company notes your concern and shortly thereafter a patch is available."

Lessons Learned

- Decide what features are important. Says Mytchak, "Be leery of tool vendors that claim to offer every last feature. Remember, you need a tool that does what you want well, not one that drowns you in complexity."

- Select tools designed using true client/server architecture. "When you want good performance combined with the functional richness provided by a thick client, make sure the tool is an actual client/server application. It is critical for remote access usability that the real work is done on the server, not on the client."

- Keep costs under control. "The majority of tools for large teams are very expensive. For a solid, capable, configuration management and bug tracking system, you simply cannot beat Seapine's tools."

Mytchak concluded, "Overall, we love these tools. They meet our needs without being overly complex—and they're also an excellent value. It's like getting a high-performance sports car for the price of an econobox."

About the Author
Allan McNaughton is a patent holding technologist and veteran writer with more than fifteen years of industry experience. He is the president of Technical Insight, LLC, a firm specializing in the composition of high-technology white papers. Mr. McNaughton is a frequent contributor to leading technology publications and can be reached at allan@technical-insight.com.