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Smalltalk Migration

Overview

- IT Trend: Medium to large corporations want to deploy *mainstream technology* (J2EE, .NET), vs. *niche technology* (Smalltalk)

- Facts:

- Smalltalk market is diminishing
- Only two commercial Smalltalk vendors left in the market place (IBM and Cincom)
- IBM will support VAST 6.X until Dec 2005
- It is more difficult to find Smalltalk talent; easier for Java

- IT Trend: Most of the companies who have invested in Smalltalk have started to plan to migrate from Smalltalk

- Facts:

- Dilemma due to difficulties in deciding which technology to use (J2EE, .NET, Java, C++, ...)
- Companies do not have in-house expertise to perform an honest and accurate architectural evaluation
- In-house expertise does not have enough real world experience on state-of-the-art technologies
- As a result, we have seen migration projects either going very slowly and/or going into the wrong direction

Common Approaches

- Total Rewrite

- Expensive
- Risky
- Takes long time to realize result

- Outsourcing (e.g. J2EE or .NET consultancy)

- Consulting company in general follows a reference architecture which might not be suitable for the problem domain (e.g. completely thin client, web-based architecture).
- Most of the design and frameworks are driven by the consulting company based on other projects that might not be very applicable.
- Experience shows that most of the projects run longer than projected, over-budget, and have difficulties in fulfilling customer requirements.

Our Approach

- Evolution versus Revolution

- Incremental changes to the application
- Based on the existing application from which recommended

Featured solutions

Architecture migration

What's the shortest distance from SmallTalk to J2EE?
It's more than just migrating functionality. Developing multi-phase architecture migration plan is the key.

architecture is derived

- Custom designed
- Work closely with all levels of customer expertise in order to understand the requirements (i.e. customer takes significant role in the migration process)

- Benefits and Result

- Less risky
- Faster to see the result
- Faster to validate the evolving architecture (and at the same time improving it)
- Customer gets familiar with the new technology early on in the process.
- Retraining therefore is minimal

Methodology

- Step 1

- High level assessment of the current Smalltalk application
- Number of classes/methods
- Analyzing logic distribution Existing layering architecture
- The state of the application (stability, performance, how well the application is separated)

- Step 2

- Provide Architectural Recommendation
- Prototype on strategic significant application areas
- Area of initial focus
- Time estimate on the initial proof of concept
- Initial toolset, platform recommendation
- Resources/expertise recommendation
- First cut on the propose architecture
- *Key: Start small and build architecture from there*
- Infrastructure Building during prototype (using J2EE project as example):
- Application Server
- IDE setup and configuration
- Java JRE, JDK
- Team development configuration
- Software infrastructure

- Develop Guidelines, Standards

- Java
- J2EE
- Team development
- Testing
- Pattern
- Development resources

- Step 3

- Maturing Architecture Through Iterative Development Cycle
- Take the experience, findings from prototype and extend/evolve the architecture
- Different projects have different nature and therefore prototyping is critical
- Full implementation from here on
- Roles: Architect/Mentor/Implementor
- Code critics
- Vigorous performance tuning
- Development metrics for management review
- *Staff productivity*
- *Monitor project progression*
- *Budget and plan future development activities*

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