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Danube Upgrade Seeks to Improve Scrum Method

By Robert Mullins

Danube Technologies released today ScrumWorks Pro 3.1, an agile development tool the company said is developed with the Scrum process of building software as its prime focus.

ScrumWorks Pro 3.1 includes both desktop and Web clients for building things the Scrum way, which brings in business people and other stakeholders as well as developers and managers onto the development team. Danube also offers training and consulting services in Scrum development, a business model similar to that of competitors such as Rally Software and VersionOne.

Founded in 2000, Danube released its first free product, ScrumWorks Basic, in 2005. Its first commercial product, ScrumWorks Pro, followed last year, said Victor Szalvay, CTO and, with his brother Laszlo, co-founder of Danube.

The desktop client now allows users to attach documents and other files to work items, and receive e-mail notification of changes to backlogged items and tasks. Also new is a change log that records all modifications made through ScrumWorks for auditing and tracking, and a task load report that allows users to see what's on the plate of other team members.

Custom calendars are also new, allowing the exclusion of holidays and weekends from burn-down charts to better gauge software delivery dates during the "sprint" phase of Scrum development.

Meanwhile, the Web client offers a new "My Tasks" view, with personalized task lists across development teams, sprint phases and products. It also allows the user to adjust relative column widths for the first time, a feature that the company described as particularly useful when paired with a widescreen monitor.

According to Szalvay, developers don't want to spend more than a minute per day updating the status of their tasks. "To a developer, it's seen as paperwork, and they want to get back to doing what they enjoy, which is coding," he explained.



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The Desktop client is the primary interface for the program; data is not stored locally but on a server accessed by all team members. The Web client, accessible via a browser, is more narrowly designed for work on specific iterations without the overhead of a desktop client, Szalvay said.

ScrumWorks Pro 3.1 is available through an on-premise license at a starting price of US\$289 per-user, per-year.

Other agile development offshoots, such as Crystal, extreme programming, and the dynamic systems development method are also alternatives to the traditional waterfall programming method. Agile development features teams of developers who build the software in brief periods, called iterations, in an open, flexible and collaborative environment. Scrum differs from those other schemes in that stakeholders—people inside an enterprise that will ultimately use the software being developed—are also part of the process, Szalvay explained.

Other processes, noted Szalvay, “did not address the stakeholders, the business owners and ROI aspects of software development. With Scrum, you can change your direction midstream and adapt to emerging business realities.”

Without providing figures to back it up, Szalvay said that Scrum is becoming the preferred way to do agile development, saying that it's embraced by more than half of agile developers.

“We almost call it the ‘gateway drug’ for agile methods, because these companies get hooked on this idea that they can change their development plans as time progresses,” Szalvay noted.

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