

USING VISUAL INTERCEPT TO IMPROVE PROCESSES, INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND PRODUCT QUALITY

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I started using Visual Intercept as my incident management tool back in 1997-98 when I was with SAFCO Technologies, Inc. I was in charge of developing a 1.5 million LOC application for the cellular telecommunications industry and managing a staff of 21 developers and four QA engineers. The development team was very strong, and we were rapidly developing new features while fixing bugs that were being tracked by a homegrown incident management system.

As a result of our rapidly growing workload, we needed to implement strong processes for the development team. We needed good tools that would not only help us implement these processes but also help improve productivity. We were already using Visual Studio (C++) and Visual SourceSafe as a part of our tool set, but as our code base grew and market share increased, our homegrown incident management system was turning out to be an Achilles heel. We had no good way of tracking any of the following:

- How long did it take for us to close a bug?
- How long did critical issues remain open?
- What were the top five sources of bugs in our product?
- How many redundant bugs were in the database?

We were also running into the issue of field-reported bugs sitting in someone's email with no easy way of importing them into the bug tracking system. Additionally, the field was not reporting issues in a timely manner,


be in the know

as they lacked a reliable mechanism for doing so. All in all, the team was working very hard only to get diminishing returns in terms of customer and field satisfaction.

No more Band-Aids

I discovered Visual Intercept 1.0 during a search on the web for process improvement tools. While the software was very new to the market; some of the features advertised told me right away that the guys at Elsinore knew what they were doing. We purchased several copies of Visual Intercept and had our QA team implement the software with a trial development team. Within the first two weeks of full usage, we had achieved the following results:

- Sixty percent of the bugs in one module resulted from some old 16-bit Windows code that we were re-using. We discovered this only because our QA team was able to attach the relevant crash code to the incident in VI
- We were alerted to the fact that our critical bug count was at an alarmingly high level. We knew this before; however having an actual number in front of you from a simple Visual Intercept query provides the motivation and hard data needed to resolve the situation.



"I RECOMMENDED AND IMPLEMENTED A VISUAL INTERCEPT SOLUTION IN TWO PREVIOUS JOBS, AND IT REMAINS A KEY PART OF MY GROUP'S DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AT MY CURRENT COMPANY."

Within our first three months of usage, we had developed a strong set of metrics that we used regularly during our operations review. This included a "smelly fish" count, which showed how long critical issues remained open in the database without anyone attending to them. Visual Intercept helped us modify and manage the processes by which a team lead was able to view open issues in the database on a weekly basis, assign them to developers and track their progress regularly. This improved not only the quality of our product, but it also helped improve the team's productivity, as we were able to identify issues and their sources more rapidly and fix them, rather than using a Band-Aid approach. For example, after Visual Intercept made us aware of the underlying problems with a module that had been giving us ongoing trouble, we decided to invest the time to re-write it

rather than continue to fix issues with old, tangled code. Finally, the process that we developed using Visual Intercept was key to getting our ISO 9000 certification at SAFCO.

I have recommended and implemented a Visual Intercept solution in two previous jobs, and it remains a key part of my group's development process. As Vice President of Product Development at PCTEL, a leading provider of Internet access products and wireless mobility software, I also ask my managers to use Visual Intercept as a tool in evaluating the performance of the developers, since Visual Intercept provides clear evidence of developers' productivity, diligence, dedication and attention to detail. In addition, we have developed a standard set of queries that we use regularly to gauge the status of the products.

Before implementing Visual Intercept, as a development organization, we were "unconsciously incompetent:" we knew we had problems but we did not know what they were. Visual Intercept helped us move to becoming "consciously incompetent:" we knew exactly what the issues were and addressed them in such a way that we have now become a "competent" development organization. And now, at PCTEL, Visual Intercept has provided us with immediate improvements in productivity and product quality and a return on investment in less than eight months.

BENEFITS

- ROI of less than eight months
- Improved product quality
- Improved development team productivity
- Key enabler in obtaining ISO 9000 certification

About Elsinore Technologies, Inc.

Elsinore Technologies, Inc., www.elsitech.com, was founded in 1995 to enable software development teams to better manage issues during all phases of the software development life cycle. Now, Elsinore Technologies' Visual Intercept enterprise work management platform is the industry's only completely scalable, closed-loop system for managing both the planned tasks and unexpected events and issues associated with work. Visual Intercept's project-oriented approach to work management is highly intuitive and easily customizable to meet the needs of each company and each user. Designed from the ground up to integrate with all Microsoft® development and productivity tools, Visual Intercept is a tightly integrated, best-of-breed platform that maximizes productivity and provides rapid ROI. Thousands of customers in 35 countries are benefiting from Visual Intercept in a diverse range of work management applications.