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IT Trends 2002: Software Configuration Management

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Question

What are the key drivers and trends in SCM for 2002?

Answer

The economic downturn has impacted enterprise adoption of software configuration management (SCM) and fostered a “show me the money” stance of enterprises toward the SCM vendors. The key drivers and trends that will impact SCM for the next 18 months are as follows:

Drivers

1. **Economic pressures trickle down through the IT organization to application development (AD) investments:** Each new purchase will be scrutinized, especially when an internal process may provide a stopgap solution or technology replacement. We forecast a weak recovery starting in the second half of 2002. Overall, North American IT budgets will be down 5 percent in 2001 from 2000, but up a modest 4 percent in 2002 — back loaded into the second half of 2002. Yet, a decrease in IT spending rarely correlates to a decrease in the demand for IT services. Often the opposite occurs. The new “make do with less” philosophy will drive for investments in quality processes, but budget cuts may pressure against purchasing tools to make the job easier.
2. **Limited convergence of SCM and WCM/ECM:** Previous attempts to converge SCM and Web content management (WCM) and enterprise content management (ECM) failed badly. Yes, the modern Web application has both content and code, but convergence is not on the horizon because there are substantial differences between the two technologies. While WCM requires strong delivery capability to allow the delivery of rich, customized and personalized content, you don’t personalize code. And unlike SCM, WCM rarely requires support for n-way differencing, branching and merging of content. Expect the need for both WCM and SCM to be fulfilled by best-of-breed partnerships and custom integration for the next 18 months.
3. **Increased complexity of the AD environment:** It sounds like the words to the old Temptations’ song, “Ball of Confusion,” but the enterprise application development environment has grown exponentially more complex. More roles are involved in the development of line of business applications, involving a greater diversity of skills, developed through a range of processes and methodologies and employing newer and more complex technologies. SCM is increasingly at the heart of this complexity, being employed, with a range of processes, enterprise cultures and project management styles, to bring order to the confusion.

Trends

1. **Show me the ROI:** Whether it’s consolidating the enterprise SCM solutions, or investing for the first time in an SCM solution, users are demanding that vendors show them the return on investment (ROI). In part this is due to the tightening AD budgets, where any life-cycle tool looks like a discretionary or optional purchase. But it’s also true that as IT becomes more of a driver in

the enterprise, IT professionals are becoming more business-centered, using tools like the business case to justify investments, whether they have complete control over their internal budget or not. Understanding the true ROI of SCM, the Total Economic Impact™ (TEI), requires looking at the costs, benefits and the flexibility of SCM, all balanced by the risks, for a true, risk-adjusted ROI.

2. **Support my processes and project management:** While SCM vendors for years have added deeper process support, it has often come at the price of complexity, lengthening the installation process of the tools. Enterprises want support now, for a wider array of processes and methodologies, allowing the process lever to be adjusted easily for the requirements of individual projects. The keyword here is agility, and vendors are being asked to ship with an array of customizable processes, templates, project management hooks, while making it the tool easy to use and customize.
3. **Integrate and manage everything I have:** For years, there has been a wall between the distributed SCM vendors and the mainframe vendors. Over the years, the wall became permeable, but the wall was still there. With the spirit of “make do with less,” users are asking the tools vendors to integrate and manage all of their assets, wherever the assets are. Increasingly, this integration and management is even being demanded of the run-time environment, so that control of application deployment to an application server comes under SCM control. The need to manage all these diverse assets also demands greater support for impact analysis in a core SCM platform.
4. **Support my entire virtual development team:** With developers working at different locations, including telecommuters, consultants and even outsourced members of the extended development team, SCM is increasingly being asked to not only support this mode of development, but to centrally coordinate and actively manage their collaboration. Support for different styles of distributed development (centrally-managed, replicated or federated) become important with the likelihood that any given organization may choose all these styles at different times for different projects.
5. **Don't make me wait:** Performance is back! With the weight of all the demands on an SCM system, users are increasingly frustrated with the speed (or the lack thereof) of many of the basic SCM operations. Coupled with the speed issue, are concerns about the overall reliability, availability and scalability of the SCM systems and how they fit into the overall application development picture. Increasingly, vendors are feeling the same pressures that other ISVs have felt, to build their SCM systems on a strong foundation such as an application server platform, in order to meet these user demands.