iRise and Watson Wyatt

Assuring User Satisfaction with Application Simulation

Getting the right pay and benefits to the right people at the right price is becoming more complex each year for global organizations that must also adhere to increasingly stringent HR governance rules. Global competition, offshore outsourcing, and cross-border mergers and acquisitions can also profoundly affect people requirements for these companies. To capitalize on such expansion and change, Watson Wyatt provides world-class human resources, pension planning, administration, and financial modeling consulting services and products that help their customers limit the fallout. With over 6,000 associates in 32 countries Watson Wyatt has grown from a small company to a global powerhouse with over $1.1B in annual revenue.

Business agility is now at a premium for Watson Wyatt, who must quickly respond to clients with the right solution, the first time – often in a fixed bid model. Traditional paper-based requirements and expensive, time-consuming coded prototypes have led to significant project delays, costly rework and an inability to take advantage of outsourcing strategies to reduce costs; problems that needed to be fixed in order for Watson Wyatt to remain competitive in the market. Using iRise, Watson Wyatt is now building an interactive, visual blueprint for what will be built before any coding, reducing confusion and expensive late stage rework, while at the same time improving client satisfaction by getting systems right, the first time. Development time has been cut by 30% and confidence in the specifications is now high enough to take advantage of more inexpensive offshore developer resources.

Corporate Profile

Europe-based human capital and financial management consulting services and products firm with 6,000 associates in 32 countries and $1.1 billion (USD) in revenue

Business Challenge

Assure their customers' business needs are being met with next-generation applications

iRise Solution

Visual simulation and validation of requirements with customers, consultants, associates and employees
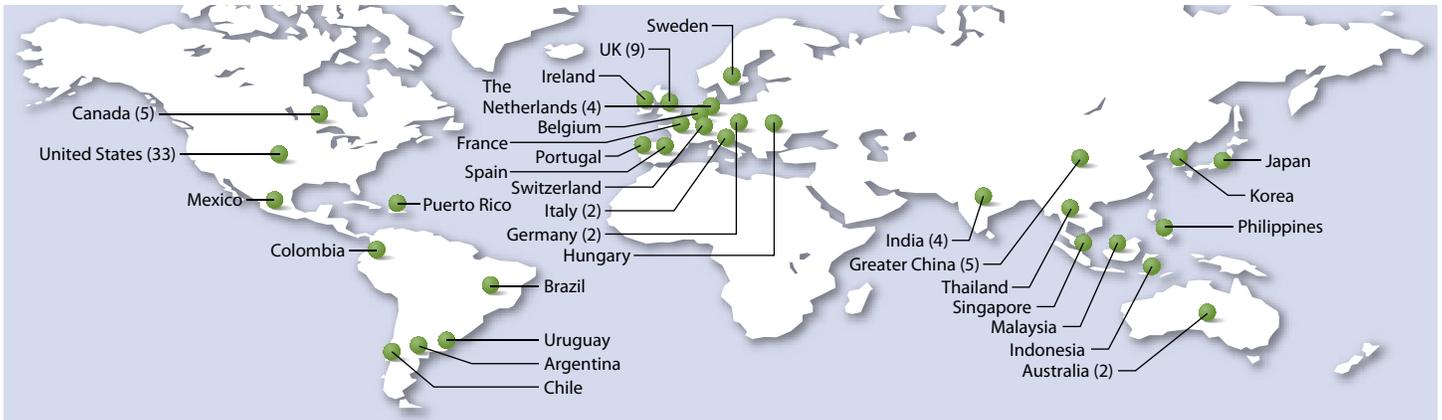
iRise Products

iRise application definition solution

iRise®
VISUALIZE. INNOVATE. DELIVER.™

Stalled at the Starting Line

With over $1.1 billion (USD) in revenue and 6,000 associates in 32 countries, Watson Wyatt is a global powerhouse in human capital and financial management consulting services. Their clients rely on them for human resources, pension planning, administration and financial modeling consulting services. Clients have also come to trust them for their integrity, excellence, creativity, and collaboration. To remain competitive in today's global market, the company relies on technology solutions that help their customers to control constantly shifting human and financial assets.

Office Locations (Number per country if more than one)

Sweden
UK (9)
Ireland
The Netherlands (4)
Belgium
France
Portugal
Spain
Switzerland
Italy (2)
Germany (2)
Hungary
Canada (5)
United States (33)
Mexico
Puerto Rico
Colombia
Brazil
Uruguay
Argentina
Chile
Japan
Korea
Philippines
India (4)
Greater China (5)
Thailand
Singapore
Malaysia
Indonesia
Australia (2)

While serving their diverse constituency, innovative product ideas often arise both from the field and from headquarters. Many of those ideas had traditionally been documented in text specifications or prototyped by developers using MS Visual Basic, but this approach came with an increasingly heavy cost. The process left little time to elicit stakeholder requirements and gain important approvals, which led to delivery delays, significant cost overruns, crisis meetings and, ultimately, unusable applications.

Only when a client saw something, usually after development, could the parties begin to have a meaningful dialog for what was really desired. And often times, these prototypes would go straight to final system development, straining IT resources while leaving accuracy and usability to chance. Frustration mounted at the ballooning cost of these systems and there was reluctance to fund the development of new projects of unknown scope. There was also little confidence in augmenting development resources offshore, putting a strain on limited IT resources.

The entire development process compromised their confidence in their ability to remain nimble and competitive. One of their mantras is, "Our clients rightly expect work of the highest quality-accurate, valuable, on time, on budget with no surprises." Yet, some of those clients were surprised by solutions because

"Clients don't know what they want until they see it."

Melvin Brandman
CIO
Watson Wyatt

they were hard-coded from the start, with little initial input from users. A truly troubling situation for such an innovative, growth -oriented firm.

To compound matters, Watson Wyatt was greeted with more and more requests for fixed bid contracts, making it very difficult to deliver user needs without significant potential negative impact to operating margins.   Coded prototypes proved too expensive and required too many IT resources to justify. To remain competitive, they needed an answer, and they needed it fast.

All Systems Go

While struggling with the financial and resource impacts that new projects posed, Melvin Brandman, Watson Wyatt's Chief Information Officer, found a way to create unambiguous previews of proposed applications using iRise. With iRise, business stakeholders from both Watson Wyatt and their clients could test drive applications long before developers ever got involved. iRise simulations could be changed quickly to respond to business and client input, so the development team knew exactly what to build – no confusion, no surprises and improved confidence in the result.

The introduction to iRise began with a highly successful proof of concept with iRise professional services. After briefly training 12 staff members in iRise Studio and application definition best practices, Brandman's team quickly created several application simulations. They started with two key projects, relying on their newfound practices and the iRise solution to facilitate the elicitation and capturing of user input and stakeholder requirements:
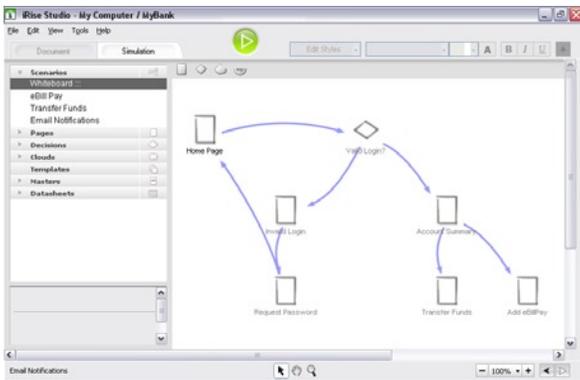
Choosing the Right Annuity

To fully ascertain the value and appropriate implementation of iRise, and to get up to speed quickly, the team simulated an "annuity selector" that would be used to buy annuities using savings from pension plans. The mock system— fully functioning entirely within iRise—merges sample financial feeds from providers and calculates the best rates based on user input. The application preview allows pension administrators and end users to pick and choose the best plan, just as if it were connected to all those external databases.

Interacting with the simulation gave the team the ability to quickly tune the final interactions (data and human) until it met their needs. Within a few weeks, the team released the simulation to the provider who soon signed-off on the specification through the Web. It will be rolled out first to administrators, followed soon thereafter

as a customer-facing solution. The simulation was fine-tuned, very quickly and painlessly, and the final application is being developed with no surprises.

Benefits

By spending quality time with stakeholders using iRise during systems definition, Watson Wyatt was able to reduce overall development time for this project by 30%, saving considerable time and money. Client satisfaction is assured, since everyone signed off on the working simulation ahead of time.

	Requirements	Development	Quality Assurance
Before	10%	80%	10%
After	40%	50%	10%

"Providers were so impressed with the experience of using a simulation to define the application that they said there was no comparison with what we were doing before," stated Melvin Brandman, CIO at Watson Wyatt.
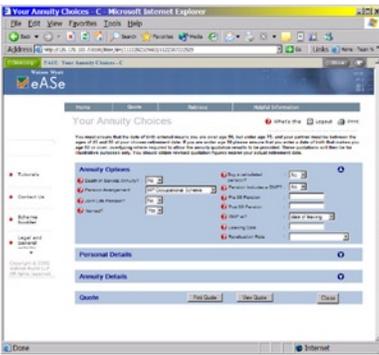
iRise simulation
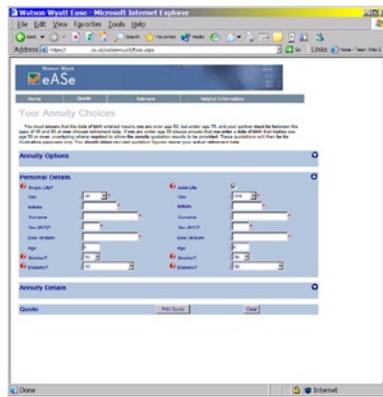
Application under development

The screens at left illustrate how well iRise can mimic final applications; all the user input fields, data interactivity, buttons and controls look and behave exactly like the final application. The main difference is that these functional and visual previews were built by business people in 1/10th the time of coded prototypes. Such easily created systems enable the business to choose how best to serve customers; control remained where it belonged. IT was brought in to validate decisions and to make sure businesspeople didn't try to create the impossible, but it was up to the business to decide how the products functioned.

Human Resources Activity-Based Costing

The second project that the team simulated was a "human resources profiler" that would analyze where HR staff members apply their time and create reports of the costs associated with various activities. Intended for three classes of users (spread all over the globe)—human resources administrators, worldwide consultants, and client management—the simulation was crucial to including the needs of all three groups into a single, usable system.

To capture requirements, the team created web-based surveys that allowed contributors to provide input on their own time. The survey results were analyzed and combined with personal observations and industry intelligence into a complete simulation. The simulation includes a system configurator

"Our up-front investment in definition using iRise paid off for us."

Melvin Brandman
CIO
Watson Wyatt

for improved usability and a data dictionary to help manage repetitive requirements. Using iRise, they conducted live stakeholder review sessions via phone/web-based conferences to visually capture all the requirements.

Benefits

Stakeholders knew exactly what would be developed because the simulation showed them exactly how it would work. All the necessary data interactions worked flawlessly and the on-demand system configuration allowed immediate user gratification. Stakeholders were so impressed by it, that some thought they were interacting with the final, coded system.

"By using iRise simulations, we can dramatically improve the process of defining software applications. Visual simulations are more engaging for the stakeholders and far superior to static, text-based descriptions in communicating business needs. The result should be less rework and reduced project risk."

Melvin Brandman
CIO
Watson Wyatt

Poised for the Future

With iRise by their side, Watson Wyatt is able to slash troubling cost overruns and delays and is much more confident about responding to fixed-cost projects. User behaviors are validated so the business is sure about their ability to serve their growing and ever-changing global customer base. In fact, the simulations are so compelling that they are used in their contractual agreements to completely eliminate any ambiguity about what will be built. "We know exactly how much things will cost", says Mr. Brandman as cost overruns become a thing of the past. The entire company's confidence is on the rise because everyone knows what will be built, the first time.

The company-wide cultural impact is being felt as they are truly able to live by their mantra of "no surprises" while developing innovative, customer-focused technology solutions. Thanks to Melvin Brandman's foresight, Watson Wyatt is well on their way to achieving their goal of becoming one of the most influential human capital consulting firms in the world. With iRise helping to leverage their vast knowledge and expertise, Watson Wyatt is poised to capitalize on the fluidity of the global human resources management market and continue their phenomenal growth.

To view the online demo of the iRise solution, please go to:

http://www.irise.com/demo

Call iRise for a personal product demonstration and be sure to ask about our free proof of concept.

iRise®
VISUALIZE. INNOVATE. DELIVER.™

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