



VersionOne adds Web services API to agile platform

Lifecycle management offering integrates with third-party tools

By Paul Krill

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VersionOne next week will roll out the Summer 2006 release of its lifecycle management platform for agile development methodologies, featuring an API to integrate with third-party tools.

The company's V1: Agile Enterprise product, available in either local or hosted versions, is a planning and product management tool for agile development. VersionOne defines agile as a feature-driven approach to development that delivers software in short iterations -- a few weeks as opposed to every couple of years.

"We manage the projects, the schedules, features, defects, tests, all of those noncode assets that flow through the agile development lifecycle," said Robert Holler, CEO of VersionOne.

The API featured in the Summer 2006 release, called V1: Agile API, uses a secure Web services interface to allow developers to integrate V1 with third-party offerings such as requirements management tools or defect management trackers. The feature is technology-independent, working with Java tools or Microsoft Visual Studio.

Data is synchronized between V1 and the third-party offerings. For example, a developer could enter a bug into VersionOne's software, whereupon it could be queried on its status in V1 and updated in the user's source system.

"It's basically opening up the information so you can integrate with any other system in your development lifecycle and really automate the flow [of information]," Holler said.

With the API, VersionOne takes on an SOA angle because of the ability to integrate with other applications, Holler added.

The API is of use even if not used to link to a third-party tool, said user Michael Zwicker, agile project architect at Lockheed Martin. Developers at Lockheed use the API to extract information from V1 and forward it in chart form to upper management. "I can pull information through the API and create the charts in seconds," Zwicker said.

VersionOne's Summer 2006 release also features enhancements that enable product managers and product "owners" -- those responsible for the vision of the end product -- to manage product backlog more effectively, Zwicker said.

Another user also lauded the API.

"The new API exposes a service that yields real-time information for incorporation into operational dashboards and will minimize the overhead in providing executive visibility," said user Ian Culling, vice president of product development at Alogent. "It also eliminates the manual entry and reconciliation between our time-tracking, project, and development management infrastructure."

Other highlights in the Summer 2006 release include the ability to track and notify users or relevant changes through RSS-based notification systems and the ability to quickly display detailed member dashboards that automate metrics based on team member data.

Also, documents, images, and other files can be attached to current system assets.

The RSS functionality, Culling said, enables stakeholders "to monitor projects/artifacts of interest without effort."

Available next week, the Summer 2006 release will cost \$500 per user plus annual support and maintenance costs for the locally deployed version. The hosted version will cost \$30 per user, per month.

VersionOne competes with Rally Software Development but cites an advantage in the breadth of its customer base. "We've got more than 1,000 teams in 30 countries using our software, and 20 of the Fortune 100," Holler said.