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Sonix Fuels Business Growth by CodeBeamer

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Sonix Technology Inc. (No. 5471 in Taiwan Stock Market) established in July 1996, and quickly presented her first voice control IC in 1997. Gradually she was recognized as the leader of voice and music control IC design house. Today, Sonix has provided much more innovative products, like image control IC, 8 bit micro control IC, USB control IC, etc. She becomes one of the fast growing consumer IC leaders.

The reasons of why Sonix can grow fast are majorly that (1) all the employees are asked to focus energy on tasks for business competitive kernel, (2) Sonix's business policy is that she should invest on the development of self-owned technology of innovative IP for long-run future and cost efficiency, (3) R&D team is capable to develop at fast speed to fulfill customers' demand, business operation is swift and responsible to fulfill good customer service. However, the fast growing with expanding human resource while organization became more and more complicated, plus new offices were established in Chengdu and Shenzhen of China, Sonix started to look for various IT solution aggressively to cope more and more complicated business process and information flow issues. Under the pressure of various collaboration demands from different departments, the department of Computer Aided Design found that CodeBeamer offered bounty functions matching to many of those demands, and such system could also facilitate their implementation of other IT solutions. Therefore, they introduced CodeBeamer to the leader of various departments.

After the discussion of CodeBeamer evaluation results by different departments inside Sonix, CodeBeamer got positive comments and was formally implemented in Sonix from March 2007.

In fact, before Sonix was aware of CodeBeamer, there had been open source systems like Bugzilla, CVS, Wiki running in Sonix. However, they experienced that the operation with those systems demanded high maintenance and education efforts, earned poor convenience in practice, exposed them in poor security of authorization, and gave very few support on system integration. Furthermore, there were also urgent demands on document sharing, co-work across various areas, and progress control management. If continuing the application of open source tools, Sonix's Computer Aided System Dept would have to build up more systems to make up the insufficient part, and ask all the users to log in many different systems for even the data process belongs to a same project, while put up with the limitation of those non-integrated systems. Otherwise, Computer Aided System Dept had to make system in house or amend those codes of open source systems to fulfill users' demand while responsible on heavy loading of multi-systems' monitoring and upgrade, besides taking tough challenge to recover those open source systems within short time whenever any system was broken down. In terms of long-run operation and resource efficiency, Computer Aided Dept thought it was better to see whether there had been some integrated commercial software which could resolve their issues. After testing CodeBeamer, they found CodeBeamer had fulfilled 80% of their demand. If applying CodeBeamer's API, Wiki Plug-in, Ant as extension tool, it is possible for them to do more system integration or atomization at various department's demands on top of CodeBeamer.

According to Computer Aided System Dept: "Before applying CodeBeamer, we were using CVS as the internal version control tool. Latter we found Subversion offered more convenience and features than CVS, and were sure of that moving to Subversion is a trend of world. So we tried to push people to use Subversion, but got lots of obstacles. Nevertheless, after CodeBeamer was implemented in Sonix, moving to Subversion became much easier." In the beginning of CodeBeamer implementation, Sonix focused on the improvement of version control and release process, as well as the information sharing among development team members.

Recently, CodeBeamer was further applied to the management of ERP implementation and customization with the purpose that all the ERP relative issues clearly traced. So far, there have been more than 200 CodeBeamer users in Sonix's offices in Taiwan and China, and more than 100 projects just counted those created by their Software Design Dept. During the interview with Sonix in Aug. 2007, Sonix expressed their five-month CodeBeamer experience as below:

- “The combination of CodeBeamer and Subversion is very helpful to code version control. It has reduced much probability of delivering wrong codes, and made it much easier to find the correct codes. Generally, the one who has the full picture of the codes per project is the project manager. For a project, Subversion will only reserved 20% of the value it should offer when the project manager is happened to be absence or has left his/her job. Under this situation, CodeBeamer trackers can make up the leak by association among codes and issues, making it much easier for the people, who may not fully know this product, find the correct codes.”, said by Mr. Tu, the Deputy Manager of System Design Dept. CodeBeamer makes it much easier to find information. It’s very helpful on reusability. Basically, if users input all the relative data into the system during the project process, people can work on the next similar project in reference to the earlier know-how and complete jobs in more efficient way.
- “CodeBeamer Wiki is a powerful feature. We have applied Trackers to process software quality review while asking engineers to update responsible tasks. Auto reports like how many bugs are still unsolved are created by Wiki plug-in. Then some engineer, for example, may see his/her bug number is dropping from 200 units in the beginning of a month on Wiki page, and realize that how much work he/she has done within the weeks. It’s also very convenient to apply Wiki page as a release information center. Via CodeBeamer’s wiki link, Software Design Dept’s client, System Design Dept, can easily view all the relative data through the wiki page. This includes project plan, bugs, release content and status, along with the connected documents or Subversion files. Earlier, Sonix has ever applied some opensource Wiki tool as the release information center, it seemed ok. However, since it was difficult to ask all people to input a long string of http of Bugzilla issues for data association, and also hard to do the document association in the release content, such release page then only acted as a bulletin. Nevertheless, since CodeBeamer was an integrated system, all the data on it can be linked easily by simple few words. This eased the communication between Software Design Dept. and System Design Dept.”, said by Mr. Yang, the Manager of Software Design Dept.
- “We have applied Forums for technique discussion. Whenever new members have questions, they can ask via CodeBeamer, and the experienced members, generally in Taiwan, will answer from time to time. This is especially helpful to the cross-area communication. CodeBeamer makes people more willing to discuss and share knowledge on line. We even discuss about the policy issue, like process change, on CodeBeamer.”, said by Mr. Yang, the Manager of Software Design Dept.

- “An integrated system makes jobs much easier, all jobs can be more efficiently traced. Earlier, we have ever used Excel to manage all the tasks, different persons could not write on Excel in the same time and many issues were often missed in the list. CodeBeamer can let all team members input or update their tasks or bugs and do various associations in any time. When someone is assigned, system will automatically send an e-mail notification to the assigned person, making the person start to work. A project manager can therefore clearly trace all tracker items in his/her project, and gets the full picture of his/her project.”, said by Ms. Chen, Manager of Design Service Dept.
- “Before using CodeBeamer, we always communicated with team members in China through e-mail, and never knew how many documents had been shared to them. Now CodeBeamer acts as the public sharing interface, what has been shared are clearly listed on the platform, and we can monitor which documents are shared and read.”, said by Mr. Tu, the Deputy Manager of System Design Dept.
- “The best part of CodeBeamer is that it allows trackers to be customized and added for various topics in each project, and each topic of tracker can have its own table and process. The customization of table fields and process for each kind of tracker is easy. Reports feature of CodeBeamer can create some reports, the created reports can also be exported to Excel, reducing lots of time of report generation.”, said by Mr. Yang, the Manager of Software Design Dept.
- “For the implementation of ERP system, earlier the issues reported by system users were generally kept in the mind of the people who got the mail or who answered the call, while phone call and e-mail are the most general communication ways that system users tend to apply. Now we have asked all the IT members to update every reported issues on CodeBeamer whenever they get messages from system users, this makes us realize that so many issues are still waiting for process. Then we can clearly trace all the opened issues, and make sure all the issues are resolved by our IT system developers or partners. We are also building up the Q&A and knowledge base with expectation to reduce the loading of answering the repeat questions. “, said by Ms. Chen, Manager of Design Service Dept.

For the coming AJAX version of CodeBeamer in Q4 2007, Sonix is optimistically looking forward to the release, and hopes that CodeBeamer could offer more integration and features in the future, believing that all the improvement on CodeBeamer will become their growing fuel in the fierce competitive IC design market.