CSA Group: Faster Process Development Using SAP NetWeaver® Visual Composer

CSA Group

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CSA Group

Industry
Professional services – not-for-profit membership association

Products and Services
Certification testing, consumer evaluation testing, standards development, education and information products

Web Site
www.csagroup.org

SAP® Solutions and Services
SAP NetWeaver® Visual Composer tool, SAP NetWeaver Business Process Management component, SAP® Ramp-Up program

Standards matter – and CSA Group helps ensure that the products we all use live up to those standards. When CSA Group wanted to **speed standards development**, it worked with SAP to revamp this core business process using the SAP NetWeaver® Visual Composer tool and the SAP NetWeaver Business Process Management component. Today, CSA Group enjoys a streamlined process and has the tools to move quickly on similar reengineering initiatives – all of which makes IT look very good.

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Not your standard standards organization

There may be no guarantees in life, but CSA Group has worked for decades to help enhance public safety. Developing workable standards is what CSA Group does – and enhancing safety has always been one of its primary concerns.

In 1948, for example, it helped develop Canada's first standard for construction hard hats. Today, billions of products on the shelves of retail chains all over North America bear the CSA certification mark. This mark – accepted by many manufacturers, governmental regulators, and consumers alike – helps make global trade happen by giving all stakeholders the assurance that products have met applicable standards.

But enhancing safety isn't the organization's only focus. Over the course of more than 90 years, CSA Group has taken on a wide range of standards – from industrial equipment, public works infrastructure, and information technology to climate change, healthcare, and energy. With more than 1,500 employees and almost as many volunteers, CSA Group is well known for an ability to drive consensus among commercial, professional, political, regulatory, and public interest constituencies. This has earned the organization a well-deserved reputation for facilitating solutions to some of the most difficult and complex issues of the day.

1,500

Employees

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Standardization starts at home

Standards developed by CSA Group are the result of the knowledge and expertise of the volunteer members who create them. Coming from all walks of life, members' backgrounds include scientists, academics, environmentalists, and technicians who represent government, industry, labor, and consumers. Standards are only finalized once the committee reaches a consensus – ensuring that a broad range of viewpoints receives a fair hearing and no single interest group dominates.

This iterative process can take years. What CSA Group wanted was more visibility into the phases of document development – with clear metrics regarding progress toward publishing. It wanted to move away from largely manual, e-mail-based procedures and an organizational tendency to store critical project information in a variety of places. It also wanted to formalize the workflow associated with document development so that managers could monitor progress and ensure that handoffs between steps were completed in a timely manner.

Or to put it differently, CSA Group wanted a standardized approach to standards development. This spelled work for the IT team at CSA Group – whose task was no less than to reengineer the organization's core business process. To help it succeed in this mission, the IT group adopted SAP NetWeaver Visual Composer and SAP NetWeaver Business Process Management (SAP NetWeaver BPM).

"We needed to revamp our core business process. SAP NetWeaver Visual Composer helped us do it faster and better."

Arnil Bahaw, IT Manager for Portals and Web, CSA Group

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Ease of use and speed of development

A long-time SAP customer, CSA Group saw the value of both offerings almost immediately. In particular, it liked the user-friendly nature of SAP NetWeaver Visual Composer, which allows CSA Group to quickly create pattern-based or freestyle user interfaces using simple drag-and-drop services and then define the data flow between them. It also liked how the tool worked in conjunction with SAP NetWeaver BPM, which the organization uses to model the underlying business process. Together, the offerings allow even nontechnical users to compose model-based business applications in a flexible way without manual coding.

To get the most up-to-date versions of each offering, CSA Group decided to upgrade to the latest version of the SAP NetWeaver technology platform, which at the time was not yet available for general release. To avoid a delay, CSA Group participated in the SAP® Ramp-Up program, which allows participants to implement new SAP software ahead of the market with high levels of support from SAP to help ensure success. With help from the SAP Ramp-Up coach, one of the special resources available to program participants, CSA Group was able to get up and running quickly – using powerful new tools to reengineer the organization's standards development process.

"We found SAP NetWeaver Visual Composer exceptionally easy to use. It took virtually no time to learn and helped us get going with our process reengineering project right out of the gate."

Reyna Sanatmaria, Senior Systems Analyst, CSA Group

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Show, don't tell

During the process reengineering project, SAP NetWeaver Visual Composer helped facilitate communication between IT and the business experts impacted by the change. "Basically, it allowed us to move a lot faster," says Arnil Bahaw, IT manager for portals and Web at CSA Group. "Instead of describing the new process, we were able to show it by generating mock-up interfaces during our discussions with business experts. This helped all stakeholders clearly understand the new process, putting everybody on the same page from day one."

For IT, the learning curve was flat. Reyna Sanatmaria, senior systems analyst at CSA Group, was charged with generating the actual interfaces after the mock-up phase. "The tool is really user-friendly," she says. "It's almost like there wasn't anything to learn – certainly no coding. I got to work right away – dragging and dropping elements to build new interfaces and connecting them to the underlying model in SAP NetWeaver BPM. Very simple."

In the end, CSA Group repurposed many of the mock-ups generated during the design phase for the live process – saving development time. Today, the organization's standards development process is supported almost entirely by the model and interfaces generated by SAP NetWeaver BPM and SAP NetWeaver Visual Composer, respectively. And by integrating the SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse component, executives at CSA Group now have visibility into standardized metrics that put the entire organization in sync regarding performance measurements. These include editing time cycles, time spent in quality review, and results of balloting phases that indicate levels of community acceptance – just to name a few.

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Flexible, efficient – and really good for IT

CSA Group sees a wide range of benefits stemming from its implementation of SAP NetWeaver Visual Composer and SAP NetWeaver BPM. One is flexibility. With SAP NetWeaver Visual Composer in particular, the IT group can sit down with business experts and quickly hammer out new or revised business processes that address changing conditions in a timely manner. This makes the organization as a whole far more agile.

Related to this is the efficiency with which IT can work to meet business needs. Using older development paradigms, new process development could take months. Now it is measured in weeks – even days. And don't forget that the new processes developed are themselves more efficient. In fact, CSA Group's goal for the newly reengineered standards development process is to reduce final document generation time by 50% – down from three years to just 18 months.

For IT, all of this makes the group look extremely good. IT can now respond faster to business needs and meet expectations more effectively. This helps turn IT from a cost center into a center for innovation where IT acts as a full partner engaged with the association to continuously improve organizational performance.

50%

Targeted reduction for document generation time

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Power to the people

To date, CSA Group's use of SAP NetWeaver Visual Composer and SAP NetWeaver BPM has been limited to IT. In the future, because the tools are so useful for nontechnical people, CSA Group wants to extend the offerings to business users. The objective is to empower business experts on the front lines to improve their processes on their own and thus further drive organizational performance and productivity.

In the meantime, IT will be using the offerings to augment the existing document generation process – adding workflow to accommodate the procedures for amending previously published standards. Based on its experience thus far, CSA Group expects this project to go smoothly as well.

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