

Winter 2008

## ZyQuest Sponsors .Net Users Group

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ZyQuest is pleased to announce that it has become a Platinum sponsor for the Fox Valley .Net Users Group (FVNUG).

The group was established in 2006 through a partnership between Fox Valley Technical College and the international consulting company, Fujitsu. The group's charter is to "create a local forum where developers, architects and managers can learn more about and share their experiences with Microsoft .Net technologies and capabilities." FVNUG's stated goal is to "provide a free and open environment, where we can listen to and ask questions of some of the industry's top experts, share experiences and discuss our challenges with other like-minded individuals."

ZyQuest consultant **David Palfery** was a co-founder of the group and currently serves as FVNUG president. **Mike Wheeler**, another ZyQuest consultant, serves as the FVNUG program director.

The group meets the second Wednesday of each month at Fox Valley Technical College. Among the topics discussed

have been Silverlight, SPI Dynamics, Rapid Web Development in .Net, Webparts, and .Net Compact Framework.

ZyQuest will also be sponsoring FVNUG's first ever Day of .Net. The .Net Day will take place on Saturday, March 15, at the Fox Valley Technical College. This is a FREE event open to anyone interested in .Net development. Attendees will learn more about topics such as Silverlight, LINQ, and Visual Studio 2008. ZyQuest consultant **David Zey** will be making a presentation on "Web Services Security".

Most IT professionals would agree that staying current with the latest technological developments is one the biggest challenges and rewards in their careers. ZyQuest is committed to ensuring that its consultants have access to training in cutting edge Information Technology. Sponsoring groups like the Fox Valley .Net User Group is one way ZyQuest makes good on that commitment.

For more information, visit the FVNUG website at <http://fvnug.wi-ineta.org>.



# industry watch **staying agile**

Unless you're a prophet speaking with authority of the Almighty to back you up, it's perilous work to predict the future. Nevertheless, many experts have taken the plunge and predicted that the future trend for software development is agile.

In a nutshell, agile is a conceptual framework that relies on short time scales and iterative approaches to development. Agile methodologies typically involve a close collaboration between developers and customers. Developers work in tight teams, features can be added in any order, and a working version of the product can be tested and delivered at any iteration.

As the name implies, agile is a development method that facilitates flexibility and revision at any stage of the product development. Each iteration, or section of the application, can be reviewed and critiqued by the developers and, importantly, end users. Changes can be made at any stage of the project life cycle.

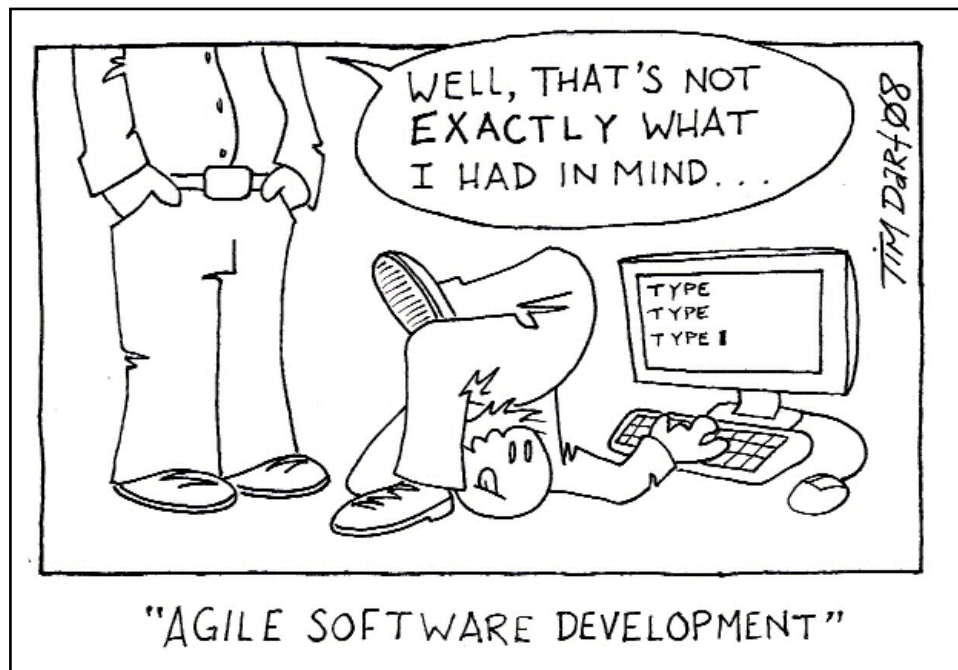
Features can be added in any order, and iterations can be released every couple of weeks.

A big advantage of agile development is that problems can be identified and addressed at any stage of the project life cycle rather than waiting for the final product to be released.

By contrast, traditional software engineering follows a "waterfall" model. Development begins with concept and proceeds through design, development, testing, installation, troubleshooting, and final operation. Waterfall projects are easy to manage, but allow little opportunity for revision. Once the waterfall has tumbled over the cliff, it can't turn back. Once a waterfall project has reached the testing stage, it is difficult and expensive to go back and fix something that was ill considered during the concept phase of the project.

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On the lighter side...



# consultant watch

## Saundra Laskowski



**A** desire to use her skills in a variety of industries led Project Manager Saundra Laskowski to consulting. An interest in the cutting-edge world of Information Technology led her to ZyQuest.

“I really like IT projects,” Saundra said when asked why she chose to launch her consulting career with an IT company. “I think IT has been really ahead of the curve in many companies in the way of implementing project management controls. So it’s natural for me to have a tendency to fall into IT projects.”

### The road to IT

Like many people in IT, Saundra didn’t grow up in the industry. She earned her undergraduate degree from the UW-Green Bay in business administration with a minor in finance and accounting. She started her professional life as an accountant, working for Humana right out of college. “Within a year, I learned I didn’t really want to be an accountant”, Saundra said. “But those analytical skills that come with being an accountant really came in handy, because I started doing a lot of financial analysis and that led into reporting which led to being a

business lead on a data warehouse project.”

After a job switch to American Medical Security, Saundra became the business lead for another data warehousing project. “At that time they didn’t have project manager job descriptions, but they really wanted me to be the project manager of the data warehouse they were putting together. And so they moved me into IT as an application development manager. So I had all the responsibilities of an application development manager but I was also doing the PM work for the data warehouse. And that’s how I moved to IT,” Saundra explained.

### The PM Path

Saundra admits that while she enjoys IT projects, she is not a programmer. “I couldn’t write a piece of code if you asked me to” she said. In fact, Saundra believes that knowing too much about the details of IT can be a pitfall to project managers, because they end up falling outside their role and trying to make IT decisions when they’re really not the IT lead. She noted, however, that an IT project manager needs some understanding of technology in order to know what questions to ask and when.

In describing the role of the project manager, Saundra explained, “You become like a jack of all trades, because essentially you go from project to project and you learn something about each system. But you’re never really the expert. I think that a lot of project managers who think they’re the expert can really fall into a big pitfall because then they start making assumptions like they know more than their technical team.”

Saundra also noted that a good project manager becomes an integral part of the project team. “I often tell my team that they should look at me as a team member that does things they don’t like. Typically, if they’re a programmer, they like to program. They don’t like to deal with status reports. They don’t like to be going to all these meetings and giving

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## Sandra Laskowski

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updates. I take all the stuff they don't like to do, and I do it. And it's a great working relationship. I'm doing something I like and enabling them to do something they like."

Sandra also noted that IT projects don't just involve dedicated techies. "The most effective teams are made up of all the players who have tasks associated with the project, and that could be IT people and business people. It's more effective when the team is fully integrated like that, where you just don't have IT going off on their own," she said. She added, "A lot of organizations run their project teams differently. Project managers just need to learn how to work within all of those different kinds of structures. But I think it's most effective when they're fully integrated."

### The best of her career

What Sandra particularly likes about her project management work is its portability. A project manager, Sandra explained, "helps the team develop a plan to achieve whatever the goal is, and then helps them execute that plan. So there are all sorts of soft skills and hard skills involved. The soft skills are a lot like a manager's skills. The hard skills are more analytical, more like scheduling, analyzing critical paths on the tasks. You always ask the same types of questions and rely on your team's expertise." That's what makes project management portable. And that's why Sandra went into consulting. "It was really to port project management experience and skills I'd gotten working in

insurance. I wanted to port that to different industries."

Over the years, Sandra has ported her skills to a wide range of projects. "I've managed billing projects, large data warehouse projects, ERP projects, enterprise document management systems. I've managed the projects dealing with HIPAA regulations. I've managed email encryption projects. So I've managed very technical projects," she said.

Sandra's project management work has also enabled her to keep current with the latest trends in software

"ZyQuest has relationships. They don't just get job orders,"

~~Sandra Laskowski

development methodologies. Sandra agrees with industry experts that one of those trends, agile development, will become increasingly common. She noted that with "a normal waterfall approach, your developers are waiting for the business analysts to get the requirements and the functional design done. So the resource models are very peaky." With agile, or iterative development, she said, "you are always feeding work to the developers because you are always having an integration at different phases."

### A career for women

When asked about the under-representation of women in IT,

Sandra commented that she has worked with a lot of women developers on her teams. She acknowledged, however, that women are not as likely as men to be heads of IT departments. As for a career in project management, "I think that women make great project managers because typically they are great multi-taskers, they're great planners, and they don't look upon planning as something negative," she said.

As a woman, Sandra also values the relationships she has been able to forge with her clients. That's another reason Sandra was attracted to ZyQuest when she decided to enter the world of consulting.

"ZyQuest has relationships. They don't just get job orders," she said. "I feel secure in the relationships ZyQuest has with its customers. And ZyQuest has a very good reputation about the quality of their contractors and consultants

they place, and their fairness to clients."

Of course, like most of us, Sandra has a life outside her career. And that life involves the horse world. So when asked what she'd do if money were no object, Sandra didn't have to think twice. "I would do something with horses. I would probably run a large stable. If I were younger, I would do something more aggressively, become a trainer, ride in the Olympics, all that good stuff." But since money is a consideration, Sandra said she was happy to keep working for ZyQuest. "I enjoy doing what I do, and it enables my hobby with horses," she said. That makes ZyQuest happy, too.



# government watch ensuring Internet freedom

Where do you go when you want to read a book review, check out a new recording artist, settle a bet on the MVP for Super Bowl II (Bart Starr, of course), find out about election riots in Kenya, or update your scorecard of the often bizarre race for the White House? The Internet, naturally. In doing so, you are engaging in an activity that is not only inconceivable to much of the world's population, but is also downright dangerous.

That danger gained international attention not long ago when Chinese journalist Shi Tao was sentenced to 10 years in prison for sharing with foreigners a message that his newspaper had received from Chinese authorities, warning it not to overplay the anniversary of the killing of pro-democracy demonstrators near Tiananmen Square. The official charge against Shi Tao was "leaking state secrets."

A few years earlier, the Chinese government had jailed dissident Wang Xiaoning for "incitement to subvert state power" after he posted on-line journals calling for democratic reform and an end to single-party rule.

Human rights violations of this sort in totalitarian countries such as China are so common that they often receive little more than a sad shake of the head from people in the west. But these cases are different. Why? Because an American corporation was instrumental in the arrests and convictions of Shi Tao and Wang Xiaoning.

That company was Yahoo, the ISP that had provided Internet access to Shi Tao and Wang Xiaoning. In both cases, Yahoo turned over personal information about the dissidents' Internet use to the Chinese government. Yahoo's cooperation with what most of the west views as serious human rights violations has sparked a controversy about how we conduct business in countries governed by

totalitarian regimes.

To address that issue, Congressman **Chris Smith** (R-NJ) has authored the Global Online Freedom Act of 2007 (H.R. 275) to prohibit U.S. Internet companies from cooperating with repressive regimes that restrict information about human rights and democracy on the Internet and use personally identifiable information to track down and punish democracy activists. The bill would make it a crime for Internet companies to turn over personal information to governments who use that information to suppress dissent.

In addition, the bill:

- 1) Creates a private right of action for individuals aggrieved by the disclosure of such personal identification to file suit in any US district court;
- 2) Prohibits US internet service providers from blocking online content of US government or US-government financed sites;
- 3) Establishes a new interagency office within the State Department charged with developing and implementing a global strategy to combat state-sponsored internet jamming by repressive countries;
- 4) Requires the new Office of Global Internet Freedom to monitor filtered terms; and to work with Internet companies and the non-profit sector to develop a voluntary code of minimum corporate standards related to Internet freedom;
- 5) Requires Internet companies to disclose to the new Office of Global Internet Freedom the terms they filter and the parameters they must meet in order to do business in Internet Restricting Countries;

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## ensuring Internet freedom

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6) Requires the President to submit to Congress an annual report designating as an “Internet Restricting Country” any nation that systematically and substantially restrict internet freedom;

7) Establishes civil penalties for businesses (up to \$2 million) and individuals (up to \$100,000) for violations of the new requirements;

8) Mandates a government feasibility study to determine what type of restrictions and safeguards should be imposed on the export of computer equipment which could be used in an Internet Restricting Country to restrict Internet freedom.

Since the bill’s introduction, Yahoo has settled a lawsuit with families of the jailed dissidents, who had sued Yahoo under human rights laws in federal court in San Francisco. Morton Sklar, executive director of the World Organization for Human Rights USA, commented that Yahoo was guilty of an “act of corporate irresponsibility and had reason to know that if they provided China with identification information that those individuals would be arrested.”

Under the terms of the settlement, Yahoo will provide financial support to the families and establish a humanitarian relief fund to support other political dissidents and their families.

Yahoo’s settlement came just one week after a Congressional hearing in which members of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee castigated Yahoo for its role in Shi’s arrest. While commending Yahoo for taking this step in the right direction, Smith commented, “Convening a Congressional hearing every time a US company helps put a human rights activist in jail should not be their only

means of securing justice. For that reason...it is important to give the families of victims like Shi Tao standing in US courts. The Global Online Freedom Act will ensure that right.”

Rep. Smith also noted that “as a nation, we have a responsibility to continue to push for the release of these human rights leaders.” He added, “American IT companies who thrive on sharing information and ideas should not be complicit in aiding the repressive Chinese government in censoring and suppressing dissent.”

China is not the only country engaged in Internet censorship. Myanmar, Belarus, Iran, Tunisian, Cuba, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, North Korea, Syria, and Uzbekistan have all been identified by Reporters Without Borders as countries that suppress freedom of information on the Internet.

Reporters Without Borders, along with other major international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, China Information Center, and the

Religious Freedom Coalition, have written to Rep. Smith in support of his Global Online Freedom Act.

In October 2007, the House Foreign Affairs Committee unanimously passed the Global Online Freedom Act. Currently, the bill is awaiting action by the Energy and Commerce Committee. A similar bill, also authored by Rep. Smith, died in the 109th Congress. Whether this bill will make it to the House floor, or will suffer the fate of its predecessor, remains to be seen.

To learn more about this bill and other legislation of importance to the IT community, visit our website at [www.zyquest.com](http://www.zyquest.com).

“The Internet has been a success because it quickly provides information to its more than 972,000,000 users globally. The growth of the Internet and other information technologies can be a force for democratic change if the information is not subject to political censorship.”

~~ Congressman Chris Smith

## staying agile

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Agile also stresses face-to-face communications, rather than written documentation, between developers, managers, and end users. While this allows everyone involved in the project to keep current and provide regular input, critics have said that it can make agile development more undisciplined than traditional development methods.

One of the new agile approaches to software engineering is called scrum. The term was borrowed from Rugby and first used by Hirotaka Takeuchi and Ikujiro Nonaka in an article titled, "The New New Product Development Game", published in 1986. Scrum relies on several small teams that work together intensively. Real-time decision-making processes are a feature of scrum. To work, the method requires well-trained and specialized teams capable of self-management,

communication, and decision-making.

Despite all the hoopla over agile/scrum, the methodology does have its critics. Some experts say that agile/scrum only works with small scale projects involving a limited number of people. These critics point to Karl Popper's *First law of collective action*: you can never get more than 5 people to agree on anything. And they say agile/scrum is naïve when it comes to human psychology, because it fails to account for the overwhelming tendency of most people to put self-interest before that of the group.

So is agile is the next big breakthrough in software development methodology or merely the flavor of the month? Time will tell. What does seem clear is that the world of information technology is always willing to try something new. Until something even newer comes along.

### ZyQuest is proud to sponsor:

FOX VALLEY DAY OF .NET!

The Fox Valley .Net User Group will be presenting their first ever Day of .Net on Saturday, March 15.

This is a FREE event open to anyone interested in .Net development. This event is targeted specifically for developers. Learn more about Silverlight, LINQ, Visual Studio 2008, etc!

Who is this for? Anyone interested in .Net development.

When is it? March 15, 2008

Where is it? Fox Valley Technical College

To learn more, go to [fvnug.org](http://fvnug.org).

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