

Live Software Solutions' technical expertise helps Gocompare.com

By Bob Little

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Software developer Live Software Solutions (LSS) has been helping developers at insurance comparison website, Gocompare.com, to make the most of its investment in Microsoft® Visual Studio® 2008 Team Foundation Server (TFS)

LSS's managing director, James Boother, explained: "TFS came about because Microsoft developers were finding that, within different projects, the phases of the software development life cycle - requirements gathering, architectural design, software design, software builds, and software testing - were not well integrated. Across projects, there was excessive variation in methodology, terminology, calculations and reporting.

"So, Microsoft produced the Microsoft Visual Studio Team System. This client/server system consolidates source code control, project management, build and test environments, work item tracking and bug tracking.

"We've been using TFS at LSS for over three years – and found it invaluable," he added. "In that time, we've developed a fair amount of expertise in working with this software – so the advice and guidance we can give is beyond that which you would find in, say, an instruction manual."

Susie Bradshaw, systems architect at Gocompare.com, commented: "TFS represents a substantial investment for us, so our developers needed to be 'up-to-speed' with all its capabilities as soon as possible.

"LSS's James Boother and its technical director, Mike Goatly, spent a few days at our offices in Newport, Gwent, helping us to explore the finer points of TFS.

"Both of them were highly knowledgeable in the product and their real-world experience of developing with TFS really came across during the training sessions. They were able to provide us with practical tips and tricks that can only be gained with extensive hands-on experience of using the product.

"At Gocompare.com, we've created a comparison service where our customers enter their details only once and compare insurance products on a like-for-like basis so that they can choose the level of cover that they need from over 90 insurance companies," she continued.

"Customers can make their decision based on the cover that is included, rather than purely on price.

"We also use a special five star rating service which indicates how closely the policies match the customer's requirements. The more stars, the closer it is to what they've asked for.

"Consequently, given the complexity of our systems, it's important that we achieve effective management and reporting across multiple projects – which is what TFS offers us. And, thanks to LSS's knowledge and practical guidance, that is what we're achieving – to the ultimate benefit of our customers," she said.

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About TFS

By deploying Microsoft® Visual Studio® 2005 Team Foundation Server (TFS) as an enterprise-wide service, Microsoft is standardising methodologies for project management, software development, and software testing - enabling effective management and reporting across multiple projects. This standardisation provides a more transparent management view into projects and makes complying with statutory reporting requirements easier.

TFS came about because people working within development projects at Microsoft found it difficult to coordinate their efforts because their tools were not integrated. The different projects could not coordinate or integrate their project planning or reporting to a high degree. TFS:

- Enables coordinated, consistent, standardised, cross-project reporting, which provides transparency to management and makes meeting statutory requirements simpler, easier, and less expensive.
- Helps project administrators employ the best set of tools and methods while meeting organisational requirements for consistency.
- Provides high-level managers with consistent, reliable information on which they can base business decisions.
- Ensures the use of standardised methodologies and taxonomies, consistent across all projects in the Microsoft Team Foundation Service.

TFS, working with the Visual Studio Team Editions and other clients, integrates all of the core roles that compose the software development process. TFS is a collaboration engine and a centralised data warehouse which provides source control management, work item tracking, integrated analysis and reporting and an integrated collaborative project website. It can also provide build and test rig management. A server running TFS also can integrate with Office Project 2003 and Office Excel 2003 to extend reporting and tracking abilities. TFS consists of two tiers (an application tier and a data tier), plus an object model.

About Gocompare.com

Gocompare.com launched in November 2006 to help people find the right insurance cover at the right price. It was founded by Hayley Parsons, who has worked her entire career in the insurance broking and aggregator markets, and was the first comparison site to focus on displaying product features rather than just listing prices. It was this philosophy that led to Gocompare.com becoming the first price comparison site to be invited to join the British Insurance Brokers Association (BIBA) in May 2008 and helped force older comparison sites to change their 'quick quote' ways and stop using assumptions to calculate estimated figures.

Today, Gocompare.com provides one of the most comprehensive online car insurance comparison services in the UK as well as comparing home, motorbike, van insurance and breakdown cover. In March 2008, Gocompare.com won a Fast Growth Business Award. The judges complemented the management team for 'an extremely well-executed business with a clear USP (unique selling point) and strong brand'.

Gocompare.com is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

About Live Software Solutions

Live Software Solutions (LSS) makes software that creates a difference.

Focusing on helping businesses that use Microsoft technologies, LSS – founded in 2004 – uses its business and software expertise to provide end-to-end solutions, from concept to implementation. In addition to software development services and consultancy, LSS also provides off-the-shelf packages. LSS's approach

is based on four core values:

- Service Excellence - achieving client confidence by truly understanding the business drivers and the project requirements, delivering the agreed solution to plan, managing issues and communicating clearly and regularly - while being easy to do business with and enjoyable to work with.
- Integrity - applying professional and technical expertise to ensure the right solution for the right reasons, as well as being open, honest and fair in all of our dealings.
- Teamwork - deploying the right blend of talent and experience to get the job done, and integrating effectively with client and third party personnel and activities.
- Development - continually seeking to enhance our own capabilities and processes, enabling us to remain innovative and challenging - and sharing this with our clients.

Further information from:

Tom Boother, LSS, 01707 267933/ 07967 633102; tboother@lss.co.uk

Bob Little, Bob Little Press & PR, 01727 860405; bob.little@boblittlepr.com

Category	Business, Technology, Software
Tags	databases, Software, MICROSOFT, Training
Email	Click to email author
Phone	00 44 (0) 1727 860405
Address	23 Sherwood Avenue St Albans
City/Town	St Albans
State/Province	Hertfordshire
Zip	AL4 9QJ
Country	United Kingdom