Xact-Soft: Leveraging Expertise on SDN

Applies to:

SAP R/3 and SAP XI

Summary

Based in Tel Aviv, Xact-Soft is a consulting company that focuses on SAP technologies and business intelligence.

Uri Lifshitz, SAP Technical Services Manager for Xact-Soft, has been a member of SDN and BPX since 2004. He recently spoke with SAP contract writer, Catherine LaCroix, about how he uses SDN to estimate the completion time for new projects and gain a broader understanding of SAP technologies.

Author(s): Catherine LaCroix

Company: SAP

Created on: 09 August 2007

LaCroix: What challenges do you face in your daily work?

Lifshitz: I have quite a few. But recently, I was working on an integration project in Holland for a big client. I went to the meeting and they started to talk about what they wanted us to do. We had only one week, and it was a very tight project. I went to my laptop and checked on SDN for the items they wanted. I found how to implement them in an integration how-to guide on SDN. This single how-to guide changed my perspective on how to evaluate the difficulty of new projects and new demands. With SDN, I don't have to reinvent the wheel.

LaCroix: How quickly do you generally find solutions on SDN?

Lifshitz: Sometimes, it's as fast as 25 seconds. A lot of times you get stuck and don't have time to resolve problems on your own. That's when you can check the forums. If you don't find your answer there, you just open a new posting and voila! You usually get a good answer.

LaCroix: What did you do before the forums?

Lifshitz: Basically, I had to learn a lot of things by myself, which took a lot of time. Now, I go into the forums to post a question and get the information. SDN is a tool that saves me time and effort.

LaCroix: What company-specific business challenges applied when you first joined the community?

Lifshitz: I had to handle an SAP R/3 install and other installs. My goal with SDN was to become more proficient with these systems, become a better administrator for R/3, and become a better integration programmer for SAP Exchange Infrastructure (XI) version 2. Nowadays, I find I have broader challenges. I'm not using SDN to deepen my understanding in a specific field; rather, it's more to familiarize myself with many different SAP technologies. Today, when I go to a company and they want to create a new interface, the main challenge is to know all the different ways that I can do that.

LaCroix: What were you trying to achieve through membership to BPX?

Lifshitz: What drew me to the BPX community is the need for a new way of approaching work. Not just the work that you need to do, but also the *way* you approach an organization to get them ready to do the work. I mainly deal with interfaces inside and between companies. So when there's a business process that crosses more than one system, I find that I don't always have the correct approach for both sides. Just to have the effective guide in the form of the BPX Community helps me to undertake these processes.

LaCroix: Which specific SDN/BPX resources do you use?

Lifshitz: Blogs. I read almost all the blogs on process integration. And I browse the forums. I use eLearning less – mainly due to a time issue.

LaCroix: How does collaboration with other experts on SDN/BPX help you in your daily work?

Lifshitz: I'm being exposed to the work of a lot of different people. When you see how other people solve their problems, it really opens your mind to a new possibility. One of the things I like about SDN is that, unlike a weekly or monthly magazine publication, a blog or forum post allows you to ask and respond to questions directly. It's not static. The very fact that you can get other people's opinions – and then start communicating directly with them – brings your knowledge to a new level.

LaCroix: What is the overall benefit of SDN to your business?

Lifshitz: In the planning phases, when I'm building a new project and giving a customer a time estimation, I can cut my learning curve significantly. I can also give the time estimate more accurately based on information I find on SDN. There's also the fact that, when you work on SDN, you're exposed to the knowledge of all the people in the community. SDN promotes its members professionally, both in the sense that you become more specialized in what you do and that you find different ways to solve each issue.

LaCroix: How much time does it save you?

Lifshitz: It saves a lot of time. It's incalculable.

LaCroix: What did you learn or gain from participation in the communities?

Lifshitz: Before SDN, I had to think hard about how to make my project work. Now that I have SDN, I have more access to solutions that make things easier. You think a lot less about whether this will work or not, because you usually know from the forums, blogs and how-to guides that it will work. So instead, you're thinking, how can I make it work better?

LaCroix: What value did SDN or BPX ultimately create for your customers?

Lifshitz: They get the same service they used to get, but even better. They get more knowledgeable counsel because we use SDN.

LaCroix: What are the key differentiators with SDN over other communities?

Lifshitz: I'm also a member of the DB2 International Users Group. And I think the main differentiation is that the other forum is focused on technical issues and the format is only "question and answer." There, I haven't seen the variety of ways to contribute that I've seen on SDN. I've got to hand it to SAP. In SDN, they've created a wonderful community of different ways to contribute with the blogs, wiki, and the forums. The most valuable thing is the exposure to knowledge; you're being exposed to a lot of different people and they're willing to commit the time and effort to share knowledge with you.

LaCroix: How has participation in SDN or BPX increased the recognition and credibility of your company?

Lifshitz: In Israel, when I talk with people, they recognize my name. I think SDN increases my reputation and the general awareness of the work I do. It also has definitely enhanced my company's position in the community.

LaCroix: What are your next steps with SDN or BPX?

Lifshitz: I participate actively in forums, but I think I should start writing some blogs, too. I want to give something back. I also teach SAP courses and often recommend SDN to my students so that they can look up problems and issues. Most of them find the solutions right away. SDN is a valuable resource they need to know about.

Copyright