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"Our Work Here is Done ..."

One of our more challenging project engagements is currently coming to a very successful end. As mentioned in our [previous newsletter](#), Renaissance provided a team of three developers to help Qoof, a young video commerce platform company, through a critical period in its product and company history. There were three goals that were defined as targets for the past 6 months:

1. Develop a solid system architecture that is reliable, scalable, and flexible enough to allow for future additions and changes.
2. Provide a "kick-start", or big push, for the product development, so that critical deadlines could be met while Qoof built its own in-house team of developers.
3. Help define reasonable and effective development processes and procedures for managing software requirements, implementation, and deployment.

By all accounts, the demanding deadlines were met, and all of the other defined objectives were also achieved. In the words of Richard Kligman, founder and CEO of Qoof: *"Working with Jackie and his team was a real pleasure. We were looking for experts that could help us build a solid foundation. With the Renaissance team we now have a strong platform that is fully scalable for any future growth"*

Tools, Technologies, and Techniques – Not!

In this section of the newsletter, I normally discuss some new and/or interesting tool, technology, or technique – and I promise I'll return to that in the next edition of the newsletter. But right now, I need to get something off my chest.

Over the past months, I have been approached by several different companies to help them clean up someone else's mess (actually, disaster). Some of these companies we've been able to help (essentially rewriting their system), some we've had to turn down, and a few we are still in the midst of discussions and specifications. The details are different, but the recurring theme is the same: a company looks to outsource some or all of its software development in order to save money. They find a vendor who offers to do the work for a low price. X months and Y thousands of dollars later, they sadly realize that the reason the vendor was so inexpensive is because the system they delivered is close to useless. Then they call me.

I've been thinking about why we at Renaissance are different from these other companies and developers. Sure, we have assembled a team of exceptional software developers – but everyone claims to have done that. Beyond raw talent and a great environment, why do we always succeed where others seem to fail? I believe that one essential component is the title of this section - Tools, Technologies, and Techniques. At Renaissance, we spend a lot of time and effort in evaluating, selecting, and continuously improving the tools, techniques, and technologies that we use for our projects. From what I've seen and heard from these other projects, the software vendors did not use recent technologies, did not use known and common best practices, failed to use any sort of structured process, and were unaware of the many tools available to make things easier and faster. I just don't get it...

Conferences and Events – Suddenly in Seattle and VSLive! New York

At the end of June, I unexpectedly found myself at Microsoft in Seattle. I was contracted by Microsoft Learning as a Subject Matter Expert to do some work on a couple of their upcoming certification exams for developers. It was my first time engaging with Microsoft in this area and I found it very interesting

and challenging. There is actually a very well-defined standard process that the development of every exam must go through, before it is offered as a "live" exam. I also extended my stay in order to meet with other contacts on campus to see what is going on in the different groups, especially as they are gearing up for the new fiscal year (July 1).

The next VSLive! conference is scheduled for September 7-10 in New York City. I'll be doing two presentations – one on using SQL Server Compact Edition and one on the soon to be released ADO.NET Entity Framework and Entity Data Model. The conference speakers include the regular team of experts that people have come to expect from VSLive! – but don't take my word for it. Check out the [video](#) with conference speakers and attendees to get an idea of the "pulse" of the conference. You can see the full conference agenda at <http://vslive.com/2008/newyork/agenda.aspx>

On the Lighter Side...

The big news in the software industry this past month has been the departure of Bill Gates from day to day activity at Microsoft. The following videos, while not necessarily humorous, should still bring a smile to your face. They may serve as an inspiration as well.

Looking Back, Moving Ahead -

<http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/exec/billg/videos/default.aspx?videoID=0>

This 15-minute video is a very human look at the history of Bill Gates and Microsoft.

Worth a Thousand Words -

<http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/exec/billg/videos/default.aspx?videoID=1>

We've all seen the famous picture of the original eleven goofy-looking members of Microsoft, including Bill Gates, Steve Balmer, and Paul Allen. This 1-minute video tells the story behind that photograph.



You can see an updated (30 years later) version of this team photo at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/142636>

I welcome the opportunity to discuss with you any of your current or planned projects. We can help you develop a technology strategy, lead your development team, or take full responsibility for your projects. I also welcome your questions and comments on any of the subjects covered in these mailings, our approaches to software development, or any of my conference presentations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jackie Goldstein". The ink is dark and the signature is written in a fluid, personal style.

Jackie Goldstein
President

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