

Synergex

Embedding an automated error-detection solution in development processes improves product quality, developer productivity and customer satisfaction.

Challenge

Product quality and customer satisfaction are of paramount importance for Synergex. Taking poor-performing products to market simply is not an option.

Solution

SYNERGEX

For more than thirty years, Synergex has established itself as a solid provider of business software development solutions. Synergex customers include ISVs occupying niches from the mid-market range to the Fortune 500 level, large corporate information technology departments, and consultants. Synergex customers develop and deploy business solutions implementing Synergex technologies for industries such as transportation, distribution, retail, manufacturing, banking, and healthcare. The flagship Synergy/

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Vice President and CTO
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DE products are used by over a million end users at more than 65,000 licensed sites around the world to improve operations and profitability.

PRODUCTS THAT BUILD MISSION-CRITICAL APPLICATIONS MUST BE FAULT-FREE

Meeting changing industry standards and accommodating the needs of its customers drives Synergex to continually upgrade and enhance its products. The mission-critical nature of its customers’ applications—including reservation and booking systems of many of the largest travel agencies and vacation rental companies, inventory systems for major retailers across America, and distribution and fulfillment systems for a variety of industries worldwide—means that each Synergy/DE release must be stable, error-free and reliable. The challenge for Synergex lies in delivering the highest quality product to its customers and a fast response if any problems arise post-deployment.

“It is essential that the products we put out in the field work reliably for our customers,” says Roger Andrews, vice president and chief technology officer (CTO) of Synergex. “Error detection must take place prior to our customers’ deployment.” Andrews adds that finding errors pre-production saves time as developers can fix problems while they are looking at the code. If a problem does occur in a customer’s



At a Glance

■ Industry

Computer Services

■ Location

United States

■ Challenge

Synergex must deliver the highest-quality product to its customers while quickly responding to any problems that arise post-deployment.

■ Solution

Use DevPartner to perform automated error detection, which improves software quality.

■ Results

- + Improved software quality and reliability in development
- + Reduced debugging time for some problems from days to minutes
- + Automated error detection of problems reported in production applications
- + Introduced more effective communication and problem-solving with third-party software vendors

deployed application, it's important for Synergex to be able to quickly diagnose the problem in order to fix it.

HIGH-LEVEL TRIAGE TO IDENTIFY AND SOLVE PROBLEMS

In his role as CTO, Andrews is frequently involved in high-level triage of product issues, trying to determine where a problem is, and how it has occurred, then assigning the fix to the appropriate member of his developer team. It is important for him to be able to pinpoint the location of errors quickly and accurately. For this reason, Synergex adopted Micro Focus® DevPartner. Since 1996, Micro Focus DevPartner has played an integral role in the Synergy/DE development process by performing automated error detection. "Our use of DevPartner BoundsChecker helps us deliver the level of quality our customers demand," explains Andrews. "We have embedded DevPartner in our development processes to evaluate and debug different types of issues that come up."

In 2011, Micro Focus released DevPartner BoundsChecker 10.5, and Andrews and his team at Synergex made quick use of the new features and functionality to take advantage of the advances in 10.5. The new version includes functional improvements that deliver advantages to Synergex. As Andrews continues,

"Windows 7 support is vital for us to test why something that works on Windows XP crashes on Windows 7, and the 64-bit support helps us test applications that have a larger footprint."

One area Andrews singles out for attention is the ability to check for leaks in a piece of memory the application does not own or that has been given back to the operating system that you then want to use—i.e., the 'dangling pointer.' "Those are the sort of things you can't find easily unless you've got a tool like DevPartner error detection," he says. That feature alone can save valuable time while trying to diagnose software problems. Importantly, Micro Focus DevPartner gives Synergex visibility of, "those problems you will never see when you're trying to debug a software problem at a customer's site," according to Andrews. "Instead of going on-site, we ask the client to send a sample that failed on his system. Ninety percent of the time, when I run it here with the Micro Focus tools, I find where the problem is."

Results

QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS AND COST REDUCTIONS

Micro Focus DevPartner has made a significant contribution to the quality and reliability of Synergex's products. "There have been several really difficult problems that we've found very

quickly with DevPartner; it's a critical piece of our quality-control process," Andrews says. There are also cost savings. "Using DevPartner certainly cuts down development time because otherwise you can spend days trying to manually track down those hidden bugs, the ones that just seem random. With a tool like DevPartner, you don't need to do that," Andrews explains.

Instead of developers spending days debugging a problem, Micro Focus DevPartner can spotlight the bug quickly, "sometimes within 20 or 30 seconds," according to Andrews. "It saves money because our developers spend time fixing bugs instead of trying to find a needle in a haystack. That is where DevPartner's ROI can be easily measured."

He goes on to say, "From our standpoint, the key to our success is customer satisfaction and that comes from our high-quality products as well as our ability to solve any problems quickly. That is probably what's most important to our customers, especially if they're shipping or relying on a mission-critical software product."

Micro Focus DevPartner also helps Synergex communicate more effectively with third-party vendors. A stack trace or screenshot can be sent from Micro Focus DevPartner to a third-party vendor to provide specific information needed to solve a problem.

Andrews and his developers are continually finding new ways to benefit from the Micro Focus DevPartner toolset and its new releases. A final word goes to Roger Andrews, "We embed DevPartner into our products and

processes and don't let our products out of the door without being checked. After all, why negate all the energy, intelligence and expertise we put into our products by failing to invest in the tools and time to ensure customers get the

maximum benefit from them? By investing in new products like DevPartner BoundsChecker 10.5, Micro Focus helps us deliver the quality levels our customers demand."

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