



Goal:

Upgrade PRIME, a data analysis software application that allows Scarborough's clients to maximize their data analysis investments.

Challenge:

Scarborough sought to minimize its development time and resources, yet still produce a powerful and flexible data analysis tool.

Cincom Smalltalk solution:

Utilizing Cincom Smalltalk VisualWorks®, Scarborough's developer was able to create PRIME NExT, an interactive, browser-driven solution with multiple report output options, customization capabilities and leading-edge features.

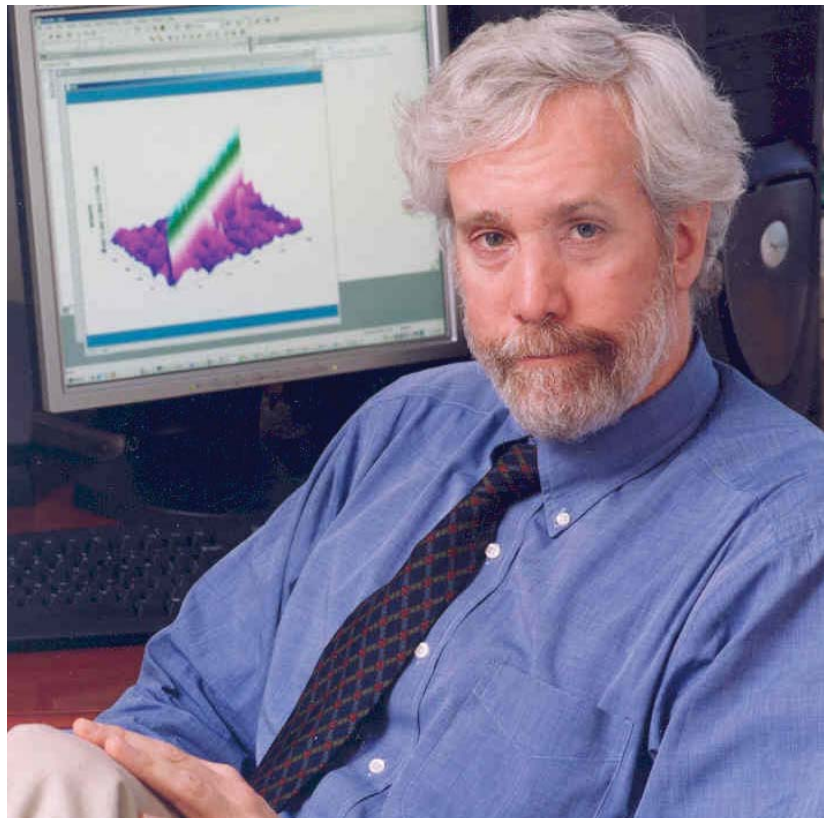
Key results:

- Reduced resources needed from six programmers to a single developer.
- Drastically cut development time and expense.
- Created an application that was much more powerful than its predecessor.

Profile in success: **Scarborough Research**

Saving time and resources with Cincom Smalltalk™

Scarborough Research uses VisualWorks® to build their data analysis software



Jim Collins, Senior VP, Information Systems, Scarborough Research

Scarborough Research needed to upgrade PRIME, an application they developed in-house to disseminate the data they collect to their client base of marketers, media executives, local media salespeople, members of the press, advertising agencies and industry analysts.

A joint partnership with VNU Inc. and Arbitron, Scarborough is one of the major media and market-research firms in the United States, measuring the lifestyle and shopping patterns, media behavior (newspaper readership, television viewing, radio listening, internet usage, etc.) and demographics of American consumers.

PRIME had been written in Visual Basic long ago and was difficult to maintain, requiring at least six developers to support it, let alone add enhancements.

Finally, the company decided to upgrade the product to a new version written in Smalltalk, using Cincom Smalltalk VisualWorks.

When asked why he chose Smalltalk, Jim Collins, Ph.D., Senior Vice-President of Information Systems for Scarborough Research, says, "I'm interested in solving problems, not writing a lot of code."

Collins has used Smalltalk since the early 1990s, when he was attracted to its graphical user interface (GUI) and its drag-and-drop capability, among other benefits. When Windows began to emerge as the standard operating system, Collins and a fellow developer began to look for a product that would allow for Windows development.

"We needed to develop a new application for Windows that had the same functionality as the old DOS application," Collins says. The choice came down to Smalltalk and C, and the decision was made to develop the application in both and compare the results. "After about three or four weeks, I had a fairly complete data access analysis tool, and the fellow working in C basically had a window with a button in the middle of it. From my point of view, it wasn't really a contest about how we would move forward."

Taking PRIME to the NExT level

When it came time to upgrade PRIME, Collins decided to move it out of Visual Basic and build the new version –PRIME NExT– in Smalltalk using Cincom Smalltalk VisualWorks.

Part of the reasoning for this is the simplicity VisualWorks offered. At the height of PRIME's development, it had six programmers working on it and making little headway. PRIME NExT's development went much more smoothly.

"You don't have whole classes of problems [in Smalltalk] that you have in C-based languages," Collins says. "And the debugger environment allows for very rapid debugging. What I like about the language is its power and its elegance. What I like about the environment is that it's a terrific debugging environment from a number of different perspectives."

VisualWorks not only allowed Collins to rapidly develop PRIME NExT, but it also cut down on support issues. "The support issues we have with the Visual Basic application are horrific compared to the kind of support issues we have with VisualWorks."

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– Jim Collins, Senior VP, Information Systems,
Scarborough Research

What it boils down to is giving clients rapid access to Scarborough's data. "From our clients' point of view, it doesn't matter what the application is written in," Collins says. "But from our point of view, we can develop the application more quickly and more reasonably at lower expense."

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