Agile PLM 9.3

Interview with Ray Hein

Version History

Version 01 January 18 This version incorporates Andrei's feedback, and will be sent to Ray to review to ensure that we've accurately captured his thoughts.

Document Description

This document contains a summary of a conversation the Agile UX team had with Ray Hein to gather his thoughts on the evolution of Agile PLM, some of the challenges ahead and his thoughts on the branding of the Agile PLM.

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Related Documents

None at this time.

Version 1 :: Jan 18, 2005

Ray Hein
V.P. of Product Strategyt

On January 10, Andrei and I together with the Agile UX team met with Ray Hein, the VP of Product Strategy at Agile. Largely considered to be "the mouthpiece for Agile", Ray has been with the company for nine years and has held numerous positions in product management and product strategy.

His focus has been primarily on mergers and acquisitions. Since the year 2000, Agile has purchased seven companies. Ray shared his thoughts at a high level on Agile's growth from one product to six, the challenges ahead for the application, and his thoughts behind the branding of Agile PLM.

The evolution of Agile PLM

Ray explained that the strategy Agile has taken when it comes to incorporating solutions from mergers and acquisitions into Agile PLM is to "homogenize the modules into PC". The rationale for this strategy has been that Agile's brand was built upon PC, its flagship product.

In the past, communication about the product records has been quite structured, but in the past 3-4 years, technologies like blogs and wikis have enabled people to put small communities together and to communicate in a less structured fashion.

In Ray's assessment, the means by which information is exchanged about products is getting even more unstructured. In fact, he told us that email is the unstructured means by which information becomes part of the product record. One of the challenges then, specifically for Agile PPM, is how to afford the types of collaborative processes wikis, blogs and email provide but within the Agile application.

Challenges

We talked about two specific challenges for Agile: PPM adoption and customizability.

PPM adoption

The primary challenge for Agile PPM is to address the following question, "How do we get users to participate in the collaborative environment provided by PPM?" This is no small feat because it requires a culture shift within a company in how they communicate today.

Andrei shared with Ray that in his experience, products are successful when there is something compelling enough about them to convince people to switch from what they are using today. Ray agreed. PPM is in a difficult spot because it needs to satisfy multiple roles within an organization.

Customizability

A second challenge is deciding on the level of customizability the application should allow for. For example, should Agile allow customizability by industry or by role? Should it provide 5, 10 or 50 customized roles out of the box?

Joel raised the concern that we'll never know all of the roles that will need to be supported by the application, and Agile should be striving to provide a level of customizability that allows administrators to control the data that is presented to an end user. Andrei expressed that when applications are designed to be more flexible, they allow for this level of configurability.

Agile brand - like Volkswagen or Sony?

To understand how Ray thinks about how Agile's various modules are positioned in the market, Andrei asked him whether he considered Agile to be more like Sony or Volkswagen in its approach to branding.

For example, Sony has several product lines like the Playstation and Wega. These products are positioned as though they come from independent companies - you know they are part of Sony, but they each have their own aesthetic. Sony is more of the distant relative in this case.

Volkswagen on the other hand has a line of cars at increasing levels of sophistication (and price) - VWs, Audis and Porsches. But they all have a noticeable family resemblance. Ray's response was that Agile is "more of a Volkswagen than a Sony", and that it's Agile's strategy to position the modules as a family of products.