ITEA Award of Excellence for Flex4Apps project providing a full digital loop

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Software providers increasingly need to focus on the optimisation of their services, including the ability to react to customer preferences. Through its flexible framework and algorithms, the ITEA project Flex4Apps creates a full loop that allows companies to offer more complex services while advancing the digital transition. For this unique result the project partners have received the ITEA Award of Excellence during the Online ITEA PO Days 2020.

Deep customer understanding, backed by data

Anybody in the industry knows that monitoring applications is important: you want to know how your apps are performing, both from a technical perspective, such as CPU usage, memory, errors, as well as from a user perspective. The problem today is that for many teams, monitoring and analytics is just one of the many things they need to do, with little technical nor methodological guidance. And collecting, storing, analysing and acting upon data from larger, distributed systems, is not that easy.

https://sirris.be/itea-award-excellence-flex4apps-project-providing-full-digital-loop

At the same time, when the Flex4Apps project was forming, one saw the raise of containers and serverless paradigms, making the monitoring challenge both harder and easier: harder in the sense that there is even more to monitor because there is more that can go wrong, and easier because the same building blocks allow for a team to build performant monitoring and analytics systems for themselves, at a reasonable cost.

The Flex4Apps partners built reference architectures using containers and serverless paradigms for dealing with monitoring and analytics, and they developed the methodological support to help teams leverage these. For the reference architectures, they opted to make those available via one-click installs (automated deployment) and they have published some of their work in a publicly available GitHub. The methodological insights were bundled in the book 'Hyperscale and Microcare, the digital business cookbook'.

Impacting in and beyond the project

Thanks to improved monitoring and analytics, project partners were able to serve their customers better, yielding better retention and better customer satisfaction, and in some cases, even better, sharper pricing of their offerings.

"We're also proud of the fact that we didn't limit ourselves to impacting only the partners in the project. By publishing our reference architectures, others can benefit from our insights too", explains Nick Boucart, Senior Technological Adviser Software and ICT at Sirris and author of the book 'Hyperscale and Microcare'.

From SaaS to book

Nick Boucart: "When SaaS started to emerge as a major new paradigm to bring new software products to the market, I immediately realised that such companies could have the advantage of measuring how users interact with their digital products, and because of the online nature, react quickly upon those insights. Designing and building a scalable, secure SaaS product in 2010-2015 was still technically challenging, as the cloud wasn't as mature as it is today. Most, if not all, development effort went into developing the actual product. Few teams that I knew were leveraging monitoring and analytics, partly because of the technical challenges related with it, partly because of the lack of methodological support on how to install a data driven approach to digital product management.

It was around that time that I got in contact with the Flex4Apps idea, during the ITEA PO days. I talked to the consortium, and saw an opportunity to work on both the technical part of data driven product management as well as the methodological part. Flex4Apps and the ITEA community gave me the opportunity to experiment with new and upcoming technical paradigms, like serverless and Docker, that were to become game

changers when building modern web and mobile apps at scale, while testing out our ideas on the methodological side in a safe and friendly yet international environment.

It was my co-writer Peter Verhasselt who pushed me into consolidating our thinking and findings into a book, called 'Hyperscale and Microcare, the Digital Cookbook'."

*Read the press release with more testimonials by the project partners **here**.*