



## Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation Server Success Story



### Summary

**Country:** Argentina

**Industry:** B2B Information

#### About the client

Aquiles Argentina is the Argentinean subsidiary of Achilles Group, a leading company in Suppliers Management Systems for companies operating in related sectors.

#### Situation

The need was to incorporate construction as a new vertical market. This started a new project called Building Confidence

#### Solution

A solution using Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation enables a team distributed in several countries to produce and develop with a high degree of productivity and within required deadlines.

#### Benefits

- Reduction of times assigned to development.
- Improvements in collaborative work in the context of a distributed workforce.
- Productivity increase.
- Greater integration of tools.

A solution based on Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation enables Achilles Group to develop a solution for the Construction vertical market.

*“The Building Confidence solution is the result of the capabilities of the teams working together with the tool - Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation Server, and it is very hard to separate it since the benefits of one are, somehow, the seed of the other”*

Nicolás Avellaneda, Achilles Country Manager

Providing a strong time saving in the production process and with the challenges of working with a team based in different countries, Achilles implements a solution using Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation Server for the construction vertical market that will enable the sharing of information among suppliers and clients.



*“Team Foundation Server was essential for managing the solution in the required times, due to its new functionalities of management, coordination, collaborative team work, tasks follow-up, and others. It was also essential for managing the problem of having a team distributed in different countries.”*

Nicolás Páez, Solution Architect from Snoop Consulting

## Situation

Aquiles Argentina is the Argentinean subsidiary of Achilles Group (Microsoft Gold Partner). It is a global company with headquarters in England and a presence in 23 countries throughout the five continents. Its main activity is the provision of Supplier Management Systems for companies operating in related sectors. It employs 60 professionals in Argentina.

In brief, Achilles is a company whose objective is to develop relationships among purchasers and suppliers of different vertical industries, reducing risk in the supply chain. As Nicolás Avellaneda, Achilles Country Manager, states *“We offer services for identification, qualification, monitoring and evaluation of suppliers for large companies that manage a large number of suppliers and contractors. The traditional sectors are oil, transport, public sector, agriculture, etc.”*

Part of the business process is to manage several suppliers' registrations with detailed information of each supplier for a specific sector or industry. *“This situation is present in all countries we operate in. In fact we have registrations from several sectors grouping around 35,000 suppliers”,* says Avellaneda.

In 2007, there appeared the need in the United Kingdom to incorporate construction as a new vertical market. This started a new project called Building Confidence. The need to launch this project created a secondary objective to develop a reliable tool in a short time.

In order to meet this need, Argentina was selected to develop the application due to the leading position of Aquiles Argentina as a supplier of similar solutions. They used the strength and collaboration of Snoop Consulting, Microsoft partner to meet the goals. *“The project was based upon three columns and each was divided among three countries: Norway, England and Argentina, with the corresponding local responsible person: Tommy Nilsen, Philip Foster and Gabriel Goldental respectively.* Since the deadlines were a key factor, we suggested a first launch of the project with basic initial

and operational functionality within two months, which we could achieve”, comments the Country Manager. Nicolás Páez, Solution Architect from Snoop Consulting adds: *“England managed everything related to requirements and testing, in Argentina we were in charge of the development, and Norway managed the solution hosting and other parts of the development. In this way we carried out the project”.*

## Solution

The solution has two stages – both developed in Argentina- one is the Buyer portal, which is the interface through which the procurement part of the construction sector searches the required suppliers and analyses them. In addition, and through the same interface, the supplier can access to check their own information. This represents 25% of the total functionality of the solution. The architect explains: *“A purchaser enters the portal and, using sophisticated search criteria, finds the suitable supplier. Then it is possible to configure alerts so that when the supplier updates information, the purchaser receives the changes automatically. It is possible to display the information detail, qualification or comments assigned by Achilles, etc.”*

The backoffice, required more time and effort to be developed. It manages all the registration process of the supplier. Avellaneda describes it as follows: *“The supplier starts the process by answering around 500 questions provided by the tool, completes the information, and then submits, the verification and documentation check process are performed by Achilles. This is the real added value of the company. It implies a process through which the supplier, after entering its information, evolves from being signed up, to be verified and then registered.*

Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation was used by the company and its partner Snoop Consulting to approach the solution. The Manager comments on his experience: *“Firstly, it helped to improve our development times, which was essential in the context of the project. Secondly, it was a guide in the development process, providing the project with a significant formality frame. And last, since different countries were involved in the project, the tool was useful for everything*

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*related to releases, tests, etc., which provided great control and speed in a very simple environment."*

Páez said the following about the tool: *"Team Foundation Server was essential for managing the solution in the required deadlines, due to its new functionalities of management, coordination, collaborative team work, tasks follow-up, and others. It was also essential for managing the problem of having a team distributed in different countries. This last point was not a minor issue due to the great number of documentation with different versions, e-mail communication, follow-up of tasks and the corresponding visibility to England.*

Among the functionalities of Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation Server, the library of documents was very useful as it prevented the continuous sending of attachments. Moreover, the code control functionality was very useful "since it allowed simultaneous work on the solution, making a parallel development possible. Furthermore, the creation of Labels in the code database provided a clear tracking of the product versions in each environment", adds Nicolás Páez, who also commented: *"The management of workitems provided by TFS allowed us to have a detailed tracking of requirements and faults, which along with the reporting functions, provided a constant visibility of the project status."*

## Benefits

*"The Building Confidence solution is the result of the capabilities of the teams working together with the tool Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation Server, and it is very hard to separate it since the benefits of one are, somehow, the seed of the other",* states Avellaneda.

The idea of working with Microsoft tools provided several important benefits including: speed of the development, its simplicity and the tool reliability.

Building Confidence became a stable tool, developed in a short time and offering the necessary reliability to be later exposed to a large number of users. *"This product needs to be reliable because later it will become massive. A system of this kind has around*

*two or three thousand suppliers that, in fact, since they access, operate, interact, etc. will use this tool daily",* comments the Manager.

Another benefit that the company obtained from the solution was that of graphic design, since it was necessary to align with Achilles' corporate image. Due to operational reasons, the graphic design was developed with a designer located in England. *"The designer worked with Visual Studio and this decision was based on the fact that the client was actually located in England and from there came the esthetic requirements, therefore, it would have taken longer and been more complicated to discuss visual issues over long distances. The designer could access the application source code which was in our Team Foundation Server, using it just like we did. Therefore we worked hand in hand, as if we were physically in the same place.* Everything would have been much more complicated if we had not had this solution", states Nicolás Páez.

Thanks to Visual Studio in a few months we produced and published the 500 questions. In short, the benefits are; as Páez says: *"Firstly, productivity of the development team has been greatly improved since using Microsoft Visual Studio 2005 version."* This point shows the harmonious integration of the different tools in the solution, through which the programmer can achieve high levels of productivity. *"Secondly, having the collaborative tools which allowed following the project on a daily basis from the point of view of team management and integration, became the second key point of Microsoft products and, therefore, the success of this project",* adds the Architect.

Finally, and to provide a clear appreciation of the project importance, it is worth mentioning here what Philip Foster, Director of Construction Area for the United Kingdom in charge of coordinating Building Confidence in England, said: *"The launch of this new service with very short deadlines, proved to be a great challenge that required high levels of professionalism, dedication, enthusiasm and hard work; we should acknowledge all participants distributed around the world who worked in the project."*

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### Software and Services

- Products

1. Microsoft Visual Studio Team Foundation Server

### Business Partner

- Snoop consulting

- [www.snoopconsulting.com](http://www.snoopconsulting.com)