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Version Control by Hector Castaneda

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In software engineering, software configuration management (SCM) is the task of tracking and controlling changes in the software. SCM consists of many interesting and complex practices. Configuration management practices include revision control and the establishment of baselines. SCM is concerned with spotting and tracking in a controlled and incremental way the changes made by system users. Version control is the particular and practical effect of this general activity; it involves managing changes to documents, programs, and other information stored as computer files. Version control is most commonly used in software development, where a team of people work on a common set of files.

As teams develop and deploy software, it is common for different versions of it to be channeled to different sites while software developers simultaneously work on upgrades. Locating and fixing bugs under such conditions often proves difficult. That is why it is vital that one is able to retrieve and run different versions of the software to determine where and in what form the bug exists; indeed, it is sometimes necessary to develop two or more versions of the software concurrently in order to do so. And many developers use Team Foundation Servers to accomplish this task.

A Team Foundation Server is a Microsoft product offering source control, data collection, reporting, and project tracking. It is intended for collaborative software development projects. A Team Foundation Server works in a three-tier architecture: the client tier, the application tier and the data tier. The client tier is used for creating and managing projects and accessing the items that are stored and managed for a project. The web services are in the application layer. The application layer also includes a web portal and a document repository facilitated by Windows SharePoint Services. The web portal, called the Team Project Portal, acts as the central point of communication for projects managed by TFS.

Project items and revisions are part of the document repository; aggregated data and generated reports are also stored there. The data layer, essentially an SQL Server 2005 Standard Edition installation, provides the persistent data storage services for the document repository. The data tier and application tier can exist on different physical or virtual servers as well, provided they are running Windows Server 2003 or later. The data tier is not exposed to the client tier; only the application tier is.

Successfully implementing and managing a version control program is not to be undertaken lightly. It behooves organizations to look for professionals when dealing with complexities of such an activity. If the first priority of any business is to improve performance by increasing revenue while decreasing costs, then turning to experts in the matter of version control and TFS hosting is vital. Fortunately, many firms specialize in TFS hosting. These firms can help companies expertly apply Team Foundation Servers by providing a source control tool hosted TFS service. Organizations looking to implement a version control system can most easily find the firms that specialize in this kind of work by scanning the Internet.

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