

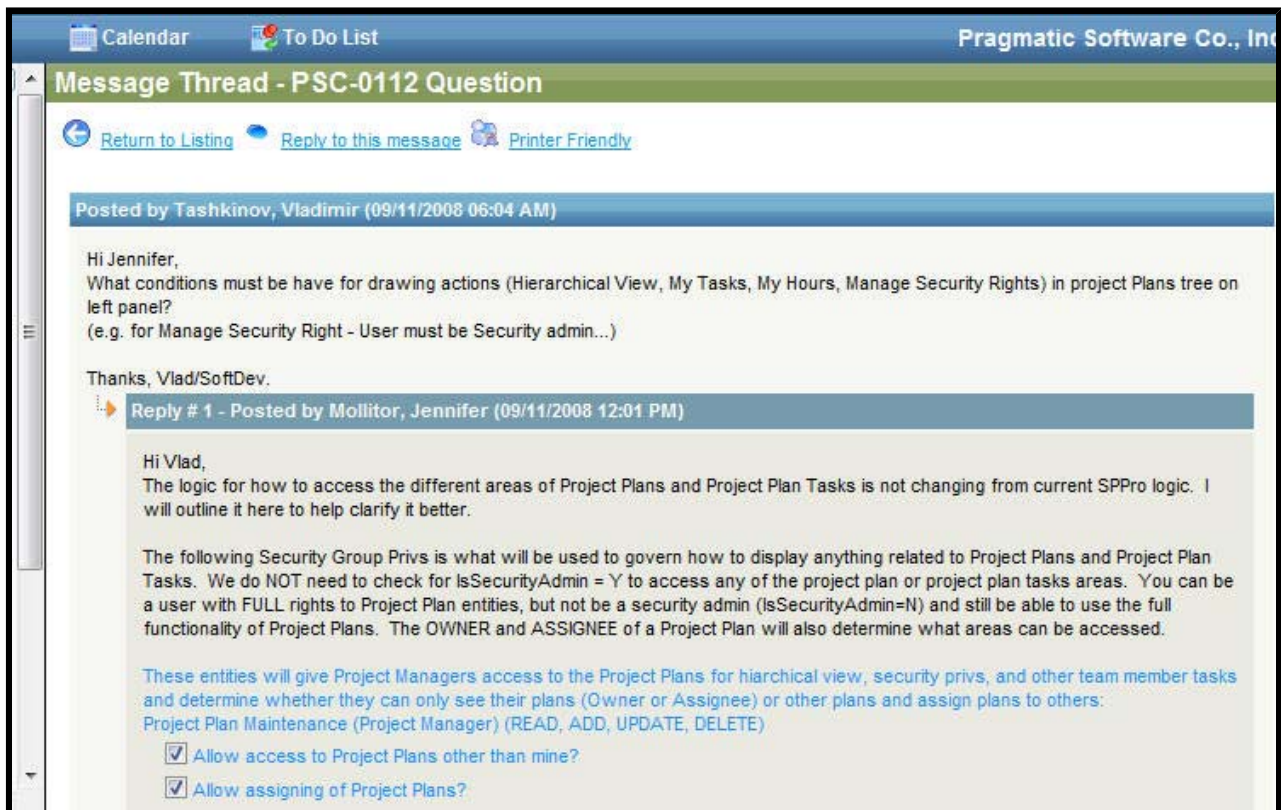
Enabling Team Collaboration with Discussion Forums

Teams keen on improving team communication and collaboration can utilize discussion forums to ensure all team members are communicated with. This newsletter discusses:

- Improving requirements via discussion forums
- Improving coding via discussion forums
- Documenting retrospectives via discussion forums
- Where to find discussion forum tools

Improving Requirements via Discussion Forums

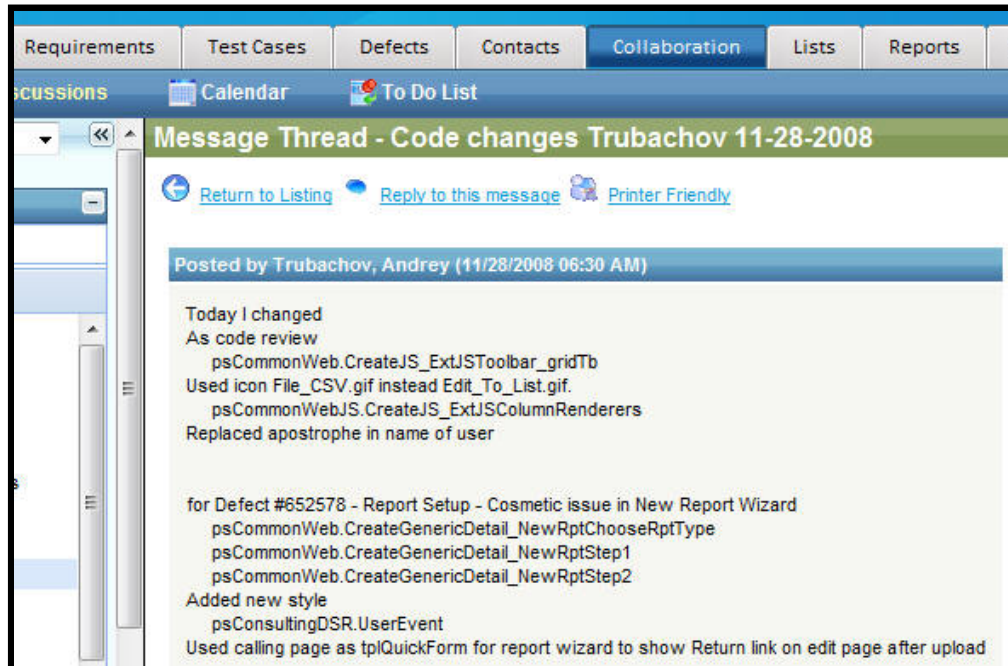
Software projects can be completed more quickly by collecting solid requirements because re-work can be minimized. A key to collecting solid requirements is to have all stakeholder review the requirements. Stakeholders includes product management, project management, programming and quality assurance team members. Once a requirement is created and ready for review, use discussion forums to communicate this to the stakeholders. As the stakeholders review the requirement, they can post their comments, questions, and concerns via the discussion forum. Things stakeholders should look for when reviewing requirements are completeness, correctness, adherence to your existing architecture, and testability. By keeping these discussions in a discussion forum, everyone is involved in the discussions and a complete history of questions, issues and answers are documented for later review. Below is an example of someone asking a clarifying question about a requirement and another team member providing guidance:



The screenshot shows a web interface for Pragmatic Software Co., Inc. with a navigation bar containing 'Calendar' and 'To Do List'. The main content area is titled 'Message Thread - PSC-0112 Question' and includes links for 'Return to Listing', 'Reply to this message', and 'Printer Friendly'. The thread starts with a post by Tashkinov, Vladimir (09/11/2008 06:04 AM) asking Jennifer for conditions on drawing actions in project plans. Jennifer replies (09/11/2008 12:01 PM) explaining the logic and providing a list of security group privileges for Project Plans, including 'Allow access to Project Plans other than mine?' and 'Allow assigning of Project Plans?'.

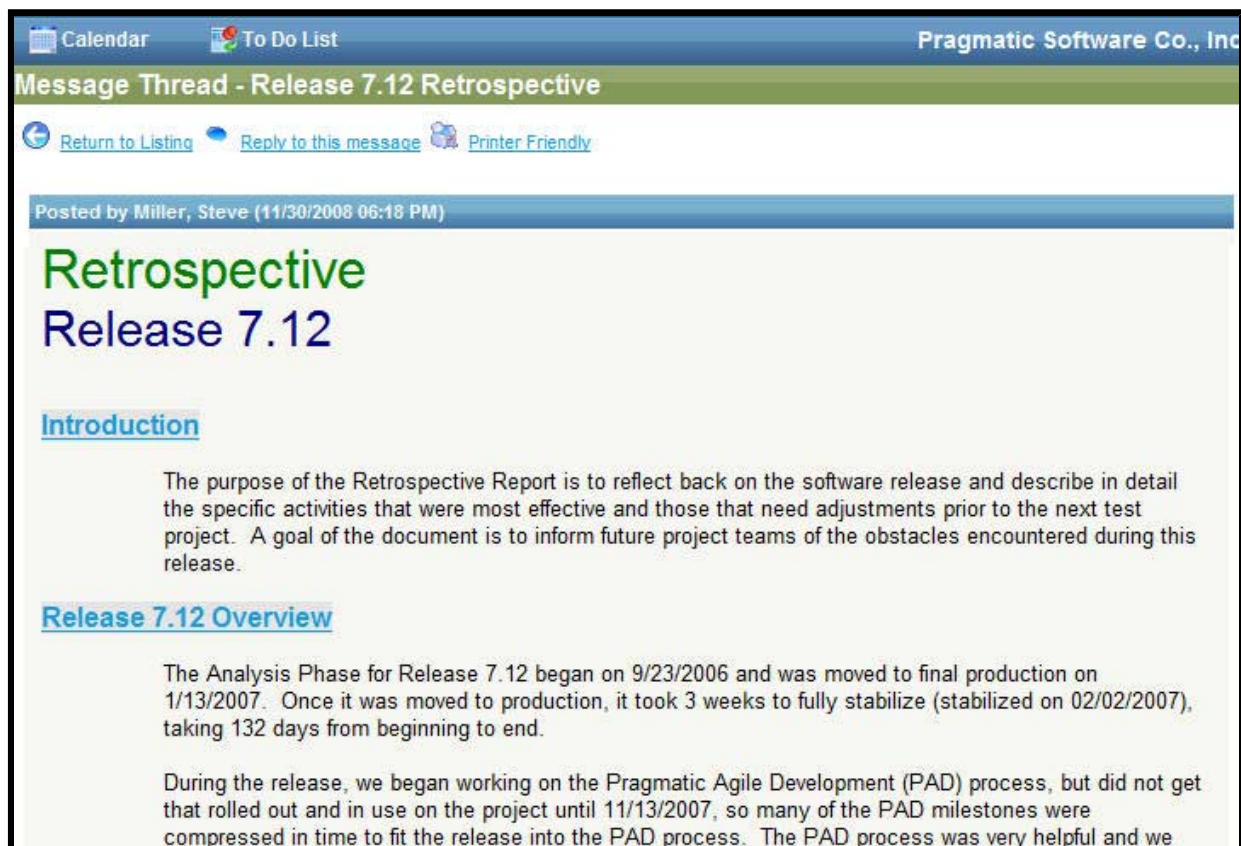
Improving Coding via Discussion Forums

When in the coding phase, it is wise to create a discussion forum for the release you are working on. Teams can use discussion forums to ask clarifying questions regarding requirements and test cases. Teams can also post a brief summary each day with their status. This can include a short description of code modules affected in each day's coding effort, defects fixed, etc. Below is an example that shows that the developer is posting his status for the day, identifying code modules changed and defects fixed:



Documenting Retrospectives via Discussion Forums

Once a software project is completed, it is important to document what went right and what went wrong with the project -- this is called a retrospective. Below is an example of a retrospective that was posted via a discussion forum:



Where to find Discussion Forum Tools

The screen shots above were from Software Planner (<http://www.SoftwarePlanner.com>). If you would like to see how

Software Planner's discussion forum tool works, navigate to <http://www.pragmaticsw.com/GuidedTours/Default.asp?FileName=DiscussionBoard>. If you wish to find free discussion forums, here are a few:

- **Google Groups** - <http://groups.google.com>
- **Yuku** - <http://www.yuku.com>
- **My Free Forum** - <http://www.myfreeforum.org>

Helpful Templates

Below are some helpful templates to aid you in developing software solutions on-time and on-budget:

- **Pragmatic Agile Development** - <http://www.pragmaticsw.com/PADOverview.pdf>
- **Software Development /QA Templates** - <http://www.pragmaticsw.com/Templates.asp>
- **Software Planner** - <http://www.SoftwarePlanner.com>
- **Agile Training** - <http://www.PragmaticSW.com/Services.asp>

About the Author

Steve Miller is the President of Pragmatic Software (<http://www.PragmaticSW.com>). With over 23 years of experience, Steve has extensive knowledge in project management, software architecture and test design. Steve publishes a monthly newsletter for companies that design and develop software. You can read other newsletters at <http://www.PragmaticSW.com/Newsletters.asp>.