



# USER EXPERIENCE SIMULATION

## SOA Blueprint

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With text-based specifications of applications, business people don't get to see and interact with applications until they're already completed. Making changes at this stage leads to cost overruns, time-to-market delays, and miscommunication between business and IT. Prototyping—either with static screen images or low-fidelity coded wireframes— has largely failed to solve these problems, since business people and end users must "fill in the gaps" to picture the full functionality of the application. And prototyping typically siphons off precious development resources, which increases cost and time to market.

New tools can simulate the user interfaces to all kinds of business applications. These tools offer a simple, drag-and-drop paradigm to assemble rich, high-fidelity simulations of applications—including business logic and data interactions—prior to development. The simulations are easy for business people and end users to understand, providing a true "test drive" of the final product. The output is a visual blueprint for what to build, eliminating confusion, cutting costs, and enhancing user adoption. Best of all, no IT resources are required to build the simulations, which can be done quickly by business analysts, user-experience designers, project managers, and architects. The following capabilities should be provided by this class of simulation tool:

- Drag-and-drop assembly of high- or low-fidelity simulation screens
- Ability to link data and business logic into the simulation
- Collaborative, team-based definition environment
- Capture and documentation of requirements in context of the simulation
- Built-in support for use-case scenarios and workflows
- Reusable definition assets
- Ability to encapsulate a simulation in a document that can be e-mailed.


People don't adopt business applications unless they're easy to use—or at least, easier than what users were working with before. But teams often don't test applications with end users until they are almost ready to deploy. This can have costly consequences if users demand changes. A new class of tools solves this problem by letting usability experts quickly create and test high-fidelity simulations directly with users in a rapid, iterative process prior to development.

Simulation is now a best practice for development organizations that want to move the process of usability testing to the front of the software development lifecycle (SDLC) process. By working closely with business analysts and developers early in the process of defining applications, teams quickly and inexpensively can fix many of the common problems associated with poor usability. A centralized user experience team can provide the following benefits:

- Standardized best practices around usability and user testing
- Education, training, and mentorship to the rest of the design and development team
- Creation and maintenance of reusable simulation (definition) assets that reflect corporate best practices
- Feedback and direction early in the SDLC
- Process guidelines, style guides.

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