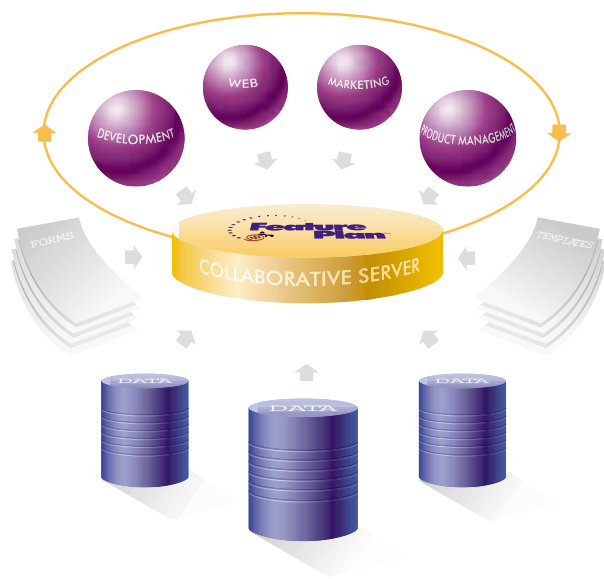


## Ryma Technology Automates Product Management Process



A team of Canadian entrepreneurs has been listening to the software development market for years, and their experience told them that product managers are bogged down by routine tasks that are laborious, time consuming, and often counter-productive. Caught between their primary tasks of designing products and communicating with customers, Sales, R&D, Marketing, and senior management, product managers inevitably face major distractions as they plod through the entire product development cycle. With these issues in mind, the entrepreneurs formed Ryma Technology Solutions Inc., spent considerable time researching the market, and built FeaturePlan™, a powerful software solution that helps IT companies streamline product management.

According to Andre Levesque, President of Ryma, “Our research showed that it’s becoming more and more difficult for product managers to work in an environment where they are swamped with tactical issues. And the demands on their time are phenomenal. Faced with deep budget cuts, they often must manage multiple products. They have to bring products out faster and better meet market requirements. Gathering and managing information is one of their biggest challenges. Most product managers are using Microsoft® Excel and PowerPoint® to manage and report requirements. And they just can’t do it anymore. The organization and sharing of information is nearly impossible. Simply put, the product management workload has outstripped the ability of the tools to keep pace.”

That’s where FeaturePlan comes in. FeaturePlan automates the product manager’s most tedious tasks—collecting, organizing, tracking and

distributing detailed product planning documents. With FeaturePlan, product managers can more easily determine product features based on market demand, competitive positioning, customer impact, and required development time and effort. At a glance, they can also see the status of all projects—including features, planned delivery date, and deviation from plan—and instantly generate the Market Requirements Document (MRD).

### Built by Product Managers for Product Managers

How does the team at Ryma know so much about the challenges that high-tech product managers face? They’ve done the job themselves. In the course of their careers, they went in search of techniques and tools to support and strengthen product management. Most of the methodologies they found were geared toward manufacturers of hard goods, as opposed to software. Then they discovered Pragmatic Marketing®, which offers product management seminars designed specifically for high-tech.

“While working for a software company, we attended Pragmatic’s Practical Product Management™ class in order to obtain the industry’s leading product management blueprint and learn best practices,” says Robin Lowry, Product Manager at Ryma. “We found Pragmatic presented a sound methodology for streamlining our product management processes, making better use of our people, and understanding and evaluating market requirements.”

Levesque agrees, “Pragmatic offers a down-to-earth approach to strategic marketing that gets straight to the point. The years of experience of the

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“FeaturePlan is freeing up product managers to actually think and analyze and weigh the decisions that need to be made.”

—Robin Lowry

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# Case Study

instructors really comes across. Plus Pragmatic's methodology is geared specifically for the software industry. In a very short time, you can master their teachings and begin to see the value. It took me only about a week to empower my product managers to use the methodology. Then everybody was in sync. It just makes perfect sense."

But Levesque realized there was something that could add even more value to this practical methodology for product management: a software solution with which to implement the process. "At the end of the class, I asked about available tools to automate everything we had learned about strategic marketing," he remembers. "Turns out, there was nothing viable on the market. So we founded Ryma and set out to automate the Pragmatic Marketing processes—what would become FeaturePlan. And we never looked back."

## Using FeaturePlan to Build FeaturePlan

The Ryma team realized the Pragmatic methodology was built on years of experience and best practices, so they followed the teachings to ensure that the product they were building was grounded in actual market requirements. With the Pragmatic course as the foundation, Ryma designed a product interface and coded a prototype. Then

they set to work using the early version of FeaturePlan to test and build the solution itself. First stop: the Pragmatic instructors.

"They've been product managers themselves and worked with hundreds more," says Lowry. "Their insights and advice about the product have been invaluable. Next, we took FeaturePlan to product managers in the field, using it to test the market, find out what they liked, what they wanted in a product to simplify and strengthen their ability to do their jobs."

"The first release we came out with was an exercise in the methodology," says Levesque. "We used FeaturePlan to conduct our own information gathering, organize market demands, and plan desired features. We used those requirements to revamp the solution. And we recently released FeaturePlan 2.0—a powerful Windows application with intuitive navigation and loads of forms—with ten months of market feedback rolled into the product."

## The Complete Solution for Product Management

Today, product managers attend the Pragmatic seminars to learn the best way to enable strategic product marketing, enhance their jobs, and communicate with target market segments in order to address high-value prospect problems. Then they

can go back to the office and deploy an easy-to-use tool that was developed to help them implement that methodology—quickly and efficiently.

"FeaturePlan reinforces and adds value to a customer's investment in Pragmatic Marketing training," emphasizes Lowry. "After you take a class and come back with all these great ideas, you can actually apply them immediately with the software. The seminar and software work hand in hand, one optimizing the other. Now product managers have both the methodology and the implementation tools to make best practices pervasive throughout their organization."

"Our customers like having a tool to help gather input, create market driven requirements, and roadmap releases," she notes. "They like the reports they can create at a touch of a button, especially the MRD. They like the traceability from input through to problem statements to requirements. They like the calendar function that lets them see all of the products they are responsible for at a glance, with milestones and target dates. By automating the manual tasks of collecting and managing data, FeaturePlan is freeing up product managers to actually think and analyze and weigh the decisions that need to be made."

Levesque adds, "Without tools such as this, product managers end up being very tactical. They simply can't find time to do the strategic work, like analyzing

volumes of data in order to design strong products that meet real market requirements. With the Pragmatic methodology and FeaturePlan, product managers have everything they need to make better decisions that are based on market facts, not opinions. They can create reports that demonstrate market demand and ROI in black and white."

## What's Next?

Ryma has recently developed tools to make sharing information between product managers and collaborators even easier. A new server version of the product enables various departments within a company to provide feedback, gain access to vital market data, and see the status of projects. At the same time, Ryma is working to integrate FeaturePlan with market-leading software development and requirements definition tools to make the hand-off to developers seamless.

Most importantly, Ryma continues to work closely with Pragmatic to ensure that its software solution implements all facets of Pragmatic's teachings—from product management to launching and marketing a product. Concludes Levesque, "We are big believers in the Pragmatic approach to product management. And we successfully used that methodology to build and expand our own business."



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To feature the product management success at your company, contact [editor@productmarketing.com](mailto:editor@productmarketing.com)