

# EDGECASE BRINGS AWARD-WINNING PRODUCT FROM VISION TO SUCCESSFUL RELEASE

How do you go from a big idea to an award-winning enterprise software solution in less than eight months? If you ask people, you'll get lots of different answers. Some will say it can't be done. Others will say the product won't be award-winning. But if you ask Brian Lusenhop at Janova, he'll just smile and say you need the right partner.

## The Big Idea

“When we started out, we saw a need for a simple and cheap way of testing web applications,” said Lusenhop. “Whether it was websites, intranets, claims applications or web applications, we saw a need we could fill from a testing standpoint. So we started designing our solution for that need.”

Lusenhop and his team believed their solution had three key parts. First, they’d build it using open source software, specifically the Ruby programming language. Second, they’d design it so testing could be done using plain English, eliminating the need for business analysts to understand code. Third, and most importantly, they’d create a software as a service (SaaS) product to enable testing to be done in the cloud. They’d seen how standard testing techniques drove up infrastructure costs and created bottlenecks by tying up machines while testers ran long testing scripts.

But Lusenhop’s team also believed their vision was too big to build all at once and decided to start small. “We thought we could create a downloadable application that would meet our first two criteria. We’d take the first year and get our feet wet with that, and then figure out how to solve the bigger problem of getting it to run in the cloud,” said Lusenhop.

## Selecting the Right Partner

The choice of Ruby programming language led Lusenhop and the Janova team to EdgeCase. “Our challenge was that we had this idea for a product and wanted to base it on Ruby and good resources are slim for that language,” said Lusenhop.

Luckily Lusenhop knew where good resources could be found. An employee had worked with a local company called EdgeCase on a former project. He told Lusenhop his experience while working with them as part of a software development team for a local, major clothing retail chain had been excellent. For Lusenhop, the recommendation helped EdgeCase stand out.

“EdgeCase met all the requirements we were looking for,” said Lusenhop. “And they kept things fairly simple with their pricing model. But it really came down to the fact that they understood Ruby and they were local. We figured if nothing else we could get across town to see them and talk to them.”

EdgeCase also used an agile development process. Lusenhop and the Janova team were already using agile development, and wanted to bring on a partner who was familiar with it. Lusenhop believed an agile approach would allow him to easily adjust priorities to ensure he could meet changing market demands.

“With agile you have a tangible piece of product or process at the end of each two-week iteration,” said Lusenhop. “That’s the big benefit of agile most traditional development approaches don’t think about. They may start gathering requirements in March with no functionality released until September, and then if it’s not really what you wanted to begin with you have to start over. In agile, if you don’t get what you want you haven’t lost much time – at most a couple of weeks. You can just discard it and change direction as you need to.”

And flexibility wasn't the only advantage agile offered. "An agile development process does provide flexibility," said Joe O'Brien, co-founder of EdgeCase. "But it also minimizes the cost of change. And not just during the development process which is when most people think about those kinds of costs. It saves over the entire life of the product, which is when maintenance costs can become burdensome."

The partnership with EdgeCase was a key component of Lusenhop's strategy to get a product out quickly and cost-effectively. "We needed to make this happen quickly. The partnership was the easy way to do that, use an agile process and have Ruby experts at our disposal," said Lusenhop.

## We Can Do That

There was one moment in the partnership with EdgeCase that stood out for everyone at Janova. It's a story Lusenhop says he shares with everyone who joins the Janova team.

Lusenhop and Janova's CEO and founder, Jeff Lusenhop, were meeting with O'Brien to discuss direction. "We were sharing with Joe our vision for where we wanted to go," said Lusenhop. "We told him we were working on the downloadable version of the product, but the true vision was to run Janova in the cloud and make it be software as a service. And Joe looked at us and said, 'We can do that.'"

Lusenhop laughed as he recalled their reaction. "Jeff and I just looked at each other and then at Joe," said Lusenhop. "Then we said 'Joe I don't think you quite understand what we're trying to do here.' And we launched into the whole explanation of the vision again."

"And again Joe just looked at us and said, 'That's not a big deal, we can do that,'" recalled Lusenhop. "So we put him to the test. We commissioned EdgeCase for a two week agile development iteration to perform a proof of concept on the cloud-based product. If it worked it would shave a year off the plan."

Two weeks later, Lusenhop and his team were running a simplified version of the Janova product as it exists today. "At that point Jeff and I had a meeting," said Lusenhop. "We knew then that the big idea was possible. So we decided to discard the downloadable version of the product, and change direction to go straight to the web."

That was in February of 2010. On September 18, 2010 the Janova automated software testing tool was released.

"Within three to four months we had 6,000 free registered trial users come through," said Lusenhop. "It's amazing to think we have thousands of people using a product that we'd just now be designing if we'd followed our original plan. And it's a testament to EdgeCase and everyone at Janova who worked on the product."

## Challenges and Triumphs

While the creation of Janova took a little over seven months, the process definitely had its ups and downs. “It was a partnership in that both sides learned a lot, and we worked through any difficulties successfully,” said Lusenhop.

The biggest challenge?

“From a purely agile standpoint you’re based on a velocity,” said Lusenhop. “How much you can get done in a two-week iteration comes down to how well you plan and estimate things. And there were times when by the end of the second week we’d only be delivering one of the ten things we set out to do.”

According to Lusenhop, the delays were all normal things. Problems ended up taking longer to troubleshoot or new features proved more difficult to implement than originally thought. In the end, the result was a stronger product and better communication.

“In some cases we were keeping things too high level,” said Lusenhop. “We’d say we needed a part of the website completed. That’s really high level. In the end we needed to get more granular with our requirements so we could realize that 90 percent of the work needed was done, but only one issue was holding things up.”

The partnership had its unifying moments as well. “Many times we were trying to figure out technologies that none of us had been involved in,” said Lusenhop. “And many times I’d get updates well into the evening...well past the time I would have thought they’d be worrying or thinking about Janova.”

Lusenhop remembers one team member in particular. “Jerry Nummi, the usability guy, is one person I worked with closely. I’d get notes on evenings and weekends, even when he was off the project he’d be sending me ideas and solutions and mockups,” said Lusenhop. “It’s that kind of dedication and energy that was really refreshing. These guys always came to the table with something new. They were really excited about what they were doing and couldn’t stop thinking about the Janova product.”

## You Can Do That

EdgeCase was such a big part of the development of Janova it would be easy to think their development team is still fully supporting the product.

But that would be a poor assumption.

“As of February 2011, with the help of EdgeCase, all development and support of Janova was fully transitioned back in-house,” said Lusenhop. “It was always the vision that they’d do the initial development and help us build a self-sufficient team. And that’s exactly what they did.”

“It’s a very different model from the traditional consulting mentality of constantly up-selling and keeping staff on-site,” said Lusenhop. “But it’s the vision Joe shared with us for what EdgeCase is

about and it's exactly what he's helped us create. I would definitely recommend EdgeCase to other companies and colleagues. They've shown me they can handle any kind of development and create an amazing result."

## About EdgeCase

EdgeCase is a software enablement and teaching company. Their status as industry leaders in the Ruby community helps clients get the most from open source technologies. They teach clients technology and how to apply it to diverse applications including total home security and automation, medical home management and college transcript delivery. Disciplined process, rigorous transparency and constant communication make the most remote clients feel as if they are in the room next door. EdgeCase clients range from Fortune 500 companies to startups. EdgeCase has offices in Columbus Ohio, Cincinnati Ohio and Edinburgh United Kingdom and can be found at [edgecase.com](http://edgecase.com).

## About Janova

Janova is a software company focused on making enterprise-level software development, implementation and maintenance more efficient, more effective and less expensive. Janova is a web-based automated software testing tool that allows you to create your scripts in plain English. Janova was awarded the IT Martini Community Award for 2010, was a Semi-Finalist for the 2010 Tech Columbus Innovation Award for Outstanding Startup Business, and won a 2011 Red Herring Top 100 North America Award. Janova is located in New Albany, Ohio and be found at [janova.us](http://janova.us).



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