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CUSTOMER STORY – RETAIL & LOGISTICS

ICA

SQS supports establishment of a centralised testing function for ICA in Sweden

Background

ICA is one of the largest retailers in the Nordics. Like many other retail companies, ICA also have a focus on cost efficient development based on stability and quality in production. Working with SQS, ICA transformed its approach to software testing, reducing costs and improving quality through a centralised testing function.

Challenge

ICA faced five key challenges:

- Testing within ICA was fragmented, de-centralised
- Tests were executed in a range of environments, from development environments through to production
- Not all test environments were managed and version controlled
- Internal test competence was very low; use of external test resource was driving costs up
- No consistent and managed approach to test tool provision

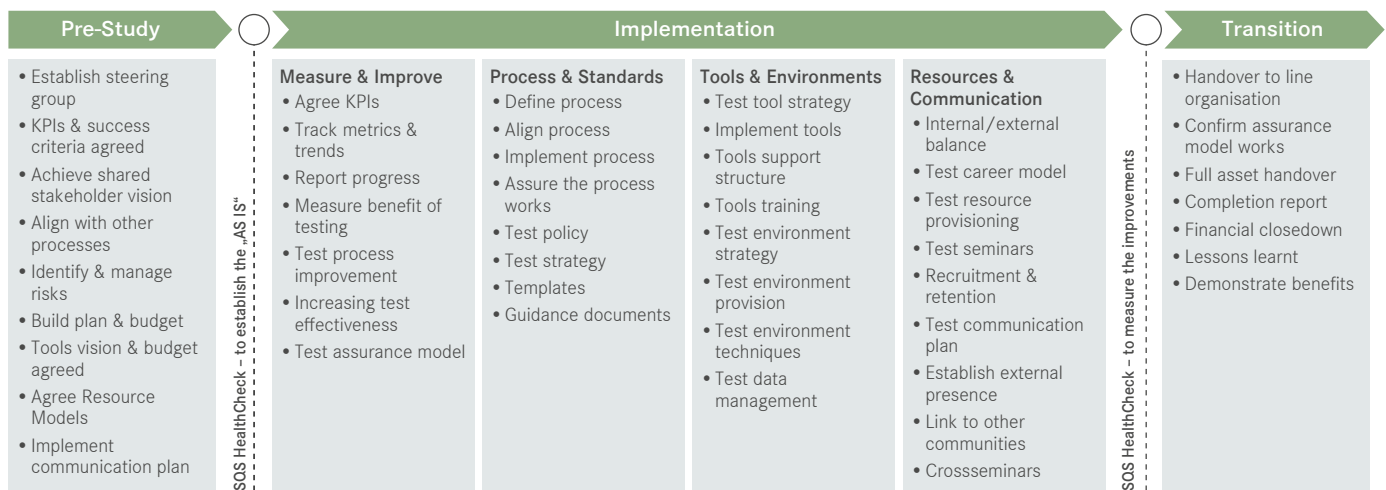
Solution

SQS has extensive experience of dealing with the challenges facing organisations that have attempted to build centralised testing functions. This experience is the basis for SQS' risk based approach to building a centralised testing function, the SQS Test Centre model.

Using this model SQS and ICA evaluated the challenges, agreeing a transformation strategy and prioritising the following high level solutions:

- Create a centralised testing function
- Create a defined and aligned test process
- Create a strong testing infrastructure
- Establish control and management around test environments
- Manage test tool provision
- Create a testing culture within ICA
- Support the development of a testing profession within ICA
- Increase the proportion of project effort and spend on testing

This combination of actions became the core pillars of the project plan, which informed the structure of the Test Centre developed with ICA.



Test Centre model implemented at ICA

Many organisations attempt to build a centralised testing function without creating the conditions which are critical to successful implementation.

Initially, SQS worked with ICA to build a solid foundation for the Test Centre, ensuring a good fit with ICA's existing project management processes and procedures. A pre-study was carried out to prove the concept before the main project commenced. This foundation was critical and involved: ensuring solid stakeholder engagement, detailed plans and budgets, widespread understanding of the goals and objectives and a shared approach to managing risk.

Key lessons from previous implementations were central to the success of the project. These included:

- Active, high level sponsorship and support – this was provided by the Head of Applications
- Solid foundations, with time invested up front to shape the solution
- A link to business benefit established at all times
- Establishing a baseline for test effectiveness and efficiency to demonstrate improvement
- Involvement and buy-in from all levels of ICA staff in the building of the Test Centre

Results

In just under two years the test centre was built and operational. Notable results achieved included:

- A centralised test function was established led by the ICA Head of Testing
- Dedicated test resources were employed and embedded in new application projects, ensuring that projects benefited from local, internal test knowledge and support
- Master test strategy written and implemented and used to shape all test efforts

- A standard ICA test process implemented, linked into project and maintenance processes and fully supported by templates and checklists
- 150% increase in the number of internal test resources
- Test tool strategy established, based upon the implementation of Quality Centre for all test management functions
- Growth of testing as a profession within ICA supported by an internal test competency network

In addition, all applications were left with an active test process improvement plan to ensure long term, on-going improvement in the overall approach to testing. This localised ownership of quality was one of the major breakthroughs, and will ensure that improvements in testing are not solely reliant upon central activities but are an organic part of the organisation.

Benefits for the Customer

The major benefits achieved from this implementation were (and continue to be) direct financial benefits. A large number of indirect and non-financial benefits were also realised, such as an increase in the effectiveness and efficiency of testing witnessed in the medium to long term.

The SQS approach to building test centres proved a solid foundation to a successful implementation and has paved the way for ICA deriving direct business benefit from their new test centre.

Contact

If you are interested in SQS' service offering regarding testing and quality management for the Retail & Logistics industry, please do not hesitate to send us an e-mail: info@sqqs.com