CUSTOMER STORY – LEGAL

Irwin Mitchell

Automated regression testing ensures that new releases can be deployed safely

Background

Irwin Mitchell LLP is a major firm of solicitors in the United Kingdom with offices in Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, Leeds, London, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield. The company also maintains overseas offices in the Spanish cities of Madrid and Malaga. The firm has 174 partners and more than 970 fee-earners, with 2,150 staff in total. Turnover in 2010 was £171.8 million, placing it 20th for UK legal firms in terms of total turnover.

Since 2009, Irwin Mitchell has been developing and improving its legal case management systems. These business-critical systems involve complex workflows, updating documents, diaries and multiple other business systems. Accuracy and reliability of the information is critical – not only could a system error lead to corruption in data quality in multiple systems, but also failure to send the right information at the right time could have serious legal ramifications.

Challenge

The Irwin Mitchell team was able to develop and test new features and functions for its case management systems successfully. However, when making changes to any system there is a significant risk of regression – a failure relating to existing functionality – and any such failure in Irwin Mitchell's systems had the potential for serious business and legal impact. Comprehensive regression testing was required to ensure that existing functionality would be unaffected by any changes to the case management systems. However, the scale and scope of the case management system made scheduling and executing effective regression testing extremely challenging. Further, the need to manually regression test multiple paths through complex workflows made regression testing a labour-intensive and slow process.

Irwin Mitchell wanted to introduce test automation so that regression testing of new releases could be run reliably, quickly and with a minimum of manual intervention, while giving business owners confidence that new releases could be deployed safely with minimal risk to existing business functions.

Solution

Irwin Mitchell commissioned SQS to build an automation proof-of-concept (POC) with the goal of accelerating the regression testing process and ultimately reducing the time taken to introduce change into the live environment without compromising quality.

"SQS has a good reputation built up among other large law firms. We selected SQS in preference to more broad-based consultancies for the depth of expertise in testing and test automation that SQS consultants offer", said Ian Fowles, Head of Programme and Portfolio Delivery at Irwin Mitchell.

Following the success of the POC, automated regression testing was expanded to cover the full case management system development. Beyond time and cost savings in executing regression testing, an important goal of the project was to train staff in the use and configuration of the automation tools – ensuring Irwin Mitchell retained in-house expertise in the tools.

Benefits for the Customer

Within three months the automation project successfully delivered against all its objectives and is on track to realise a positive ROI within six months.

- Time savings as a result of the automation are huge. Tests can be run out of hours and distributed over multiple machines. This reduces the time taken to implement a system release into the live environment.

- Automated regression testing of the case management system can be carried out with far greater test coverage than previously possible: encompassing every type of input and output.

- Key resources are now released from manual regression testing activities, allowing them to focus on strategic initiatives.

- Considerably fewer defects are being found in the live environment as a result of more comprehensive regression testing.

- Irwin Mitchell has a scalable and easily maintainable test automation framework in place for any future development work and the internal team has been trained in its use and configuration.

Ian Fowles commented, "At Irwin Mitchell we are implementing best-of-breed testing practices. We believe that there is great potential to add even more value with SQS and broaden the scope of the test automation project to other areas."

Contact

If you are interested in SQS' service offering regarding testing and quality management, please do not hesitate to send us an e-mail: info@sqs.com

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