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CUSTOMER STORY – BANKING & FINANCIAL SERVICES

Online Retail Banking

Automation and innovation in managed testing services

Background

Operating since the late nineties, this bank grew to become one of the world's largest online banks, specialising in savings, loans, credit cards and travel insurance. For over a decade, SQS has been an integral part of the bank's IT team. Seen as a trusted partner, SQS has provided expert, independent testing and quality assurance services that span managed services and automated regression testing to agile, test-driven development and data migration.

SQS' focus on the financial sector and ability to provide strong technical resources as needed were an important part of the bank's decision to work with the software quality provider. The project teams contained a mix of technical and functional skills, and SQS worked on a wide range of changes to both the presentation layers of the bank's applications and the hardware those applications were hosted on (including upgrades to web servers, application servers and databases).

Challenge

The internal testing team managed a large volume of tests across the business and the scope of testing covered the customer-facing web site, back office call centre applications for retail banking (cards, loans and savings) and other products such as travel insurance.

As the bank grew, each release of a new product or revision to existing products increased the volume and complexity of testing. To mitigate the growing testing burden, increase the pace of delivery into live and ensure high availability of delivered systems, the internal team sought to expand the level and scope of automated regression testing.

"SQS is one of the few groups that truly understand the quality assurance process, and can implement with the enthusiasm and passion required in fast-moving companies such as ours [...] SQS has helped us create and hone its agile methodology and its culture to a place where test-driven development results in a quality of delivery rarely seen in technology today."

Director, Technology Solutions

Cost reduction and risk reduction were also high on the agenda and, following the sale of the bank, assuring a smooth transition to the new owners was critical.

Following the announcement of the sale, a number of customer-facing services were retired or curtailed, increasing the need for extensive regression testing (for example, applications for new credit cards were closed, however it was important for existing customers to retain access to existing functionality).

Solution

Commercial and technical innovation are core features of SQS' business model and after a series of successful projects SQS entered into an innovative Test Point based managed services agreement to meet the bank's requirement for scalable, affordable and effective testing.

SQS Test Points

- Each test process is divided into steps (or Test Points) e.g. the ability to login to a site or to move from one screen to another
- Each Test Point has a fixed monetary value – determined after an initial calibration phase
- The client pays only for the Test Points completed by SQS, focusing attention on efficiency and clarity in forward planning
- Year-on-year reduction in the monetary value of a Test Point can be part of the commercial agreement

In the Test Point system a fixed monetary value is assigned to the completion of each testing step or action. These Test Points are at the atomic level (for example, filling in a field or clicking a button) and enable reliable calculation of the tariff for test scripts – regardless of technology, the script's length or complexity.

The project teams worked extremely closely together to ensure changes were delivered on time and to a high degree of quality into the live environment.

Since the bank's acquisition, all efforts have been geared towards data migration within a tight timeframe to enable smooth transition to the new owners. SQS' automation framework coupled with deep financial sector testing experience and flexibility has enabled the team to support the changes required.

Benefits for the Customer

A key feature of the Test Point based contract was incentivising SQS to continuously improve flexibility and efficiency while providing excellence in test delivery through a transparent and predictable pricing model. The bank was able to transfer the risk of establishing, managing and executing automated testing while SQS committed to reduce the cost of each Test Point (and hence the cost of carrying out a test) on a year-on-year basis.

Key Facts

- Testing for seventeen releases per month on average
- 46,500 Test Points per month executed on average
- Over 60 changes per month tested (at peak) with live availability of over 99%
- Over 500 automation scripts in place (at peak)
- Right-first-time delivery metrics: > 90%

Since the inception of the managed service in early 2005, SQS operating model provided flexible, scalable support to the bank, servicing up to ten project teams during the busiest periods, including 356 changes in 2006 which accrued 1,037,086 Test Points. This helped to quality assure over 60 changes per month with live availability maintained at exceptionally high levels (over 99%). Testing by SQS identified many high severity defects, some of which could have caused severe financial and reputational damage had they not been caught. SQS also helped drive up the quality of delivery leading to right-first-time statistics being maintained above 90%.

The Test Point model separated the physical testing from the cost of that testing, simplifying commercial negotiations. Further, the predictability of the model enabled better planning by allowing the cost of future testing scenarios to be extrapolated reliably. The managed services contract was seen by the bank as innovative in both its technical and commercial terms; incentivising SQS to deliver higher quality testing and automation flexibly, while reducing the cost to the client and supporting the smooth transfer of data to the new owners.

Contact

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