How Ageas 50 lifted its sales and administration productivity

"One of the most fiercely competitive markets in the world" [1]

That's how Ernst & Young describes the UK insurance market. And in that competitive environment - with all the regulatory and technological complexity that comes with it - implementing new applications has become ever more risky.

A fact that Ageas 50 knows all too well. Their core sales and administration system was causing problems that were adding cost to the business. Quality and deadline issues were frustrating business users and affecting the company's competitive performance.

With the help of Original Software, Ageas 50 has significantly improved the quality of deployed applications with post deployment issues reducing by over 94%.

What's more, they have standardized and streamlined all testing, resulting in a dramatically higher level of satisfaction among business users of all applications. Focus is now on testing new functionality knowing that regression testing is much more robust.

"IT has grown rapidly, with every new application adding complexity", says QA Manager, David Jewell. "New apps were necessary for the business to compete, but they also meant more work and risk in deploying service packs, upgrades and patches. Ultimately, there was too much disruption to business users so we needed to take a more formal approach to testing".

> ❝ *Post deployment issues reduced by 94%*

Ageas 50 Story

Ageas provides both non-life and life insurance products. Ageas 50 is its brand aimed at people over 50 years of age.

The Challenge

Quality issues with a core sales and administration application were disrupting business and severely impacting operational efficiency. Ageas 50 recognized that addressing this would also help them overcome the challenges of an increasingly complex application portfolio and deliver more robust application services. Hiring additional employees was not an option.

Our Solutions

> Qualify (Test Management)

> TestDrive (Test Automation)

> TestDrive-Assist (Manual Testing)

The Benefits

✔ Marked productivity gains among end users of enterprise applications

✔ Test efficiency up 125% in first year

✔ Hiring of five FTE's avoided

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Original Software

Like a wall has come down

> ## " *Significantly improved IT and user productivity*

Using test management and execution solutions from Original Software, Ageas 50 has been able to set up efficient, scalable testing that have significantly improved both IT productivity and user productivity. Across the application portfolio - from business intelligence, the marketing database, to accounts and agent systems – the benefits are felt.

"We upped our game with Original Software", says Head of IT, John Osborne, "We aligned IT with the business, and now we deliver faster and with much better quality. There's no doubt that the level of satisfaction has increased tremendously. It's like a wall has come down".

"We've developed a better relationship with our business users because we now have more of a partnership approach engendering more trust, understanding and confidence in what we are deploying".

David Jewell, QA manager, picks up the thread. "Previously, when IT deployed a new release, they would provide business users with details of known problems, and users would develop workarounds. The trouble was that there would be a whole range of problems that we weren't aware of, and emergency measures would have to be taken. Now, because we can identify those issues earlier in the test process, we have reduced the business disruption associated with new releases significantly".

Keep the team small and the costs down

Not only has Original Software helped IT improve the service they offered business users, it has made it possible to do without increasing resources. In fact, this was a prerequisite for Ageas 50 when they were selecting which new tools to use.

"We wanted tools that supported the way we worked," says Chris Andrews, who led the project resulting in the roll-out of Original Software. "Tools that would enable us to manage and automate testing efficiently and to scramble the data to meet data protection requirements. But, perhaps most importantly, we didn't want to get locked into having the scarce and expensive programming skill sets that some test tools require."

To get a balanced view of the solutions on offer, Ageas 50 adopted a formal assessment of options available which resulted in a clear winner: the one that offered the most value and required the least skills.

"The tools from Original Software were head and shoulders above the rest", says Andrews. "The functionality was extremely powerful and there was no need for programming at any stage. Everything was point-and-click and context sensitive".

During the implementation of the new sales app we had built up a team of people who had business experience and had also picked up testing skills. But they had no programming skills. By adopting the Original Software solutions, we could keep that team of people intact, which was very valuable to us."

> ## " *Reduced the business disruption with new releases significantly*

Unexpected–but welcome–surprise

Experts from Original Software helped Ageas 50 set up the software. "The consultants that came to help us were very knowledgeable", Andrews says. "As well as knowing the product inside out, they also had a very good understanding of the business aspects of testing".

The consultants helped Ageas 50 develop the initial testing model within Qualify, Original Software's quality management solution. "We based the first model on how we had been approaching testing in the past and setting it up was a very straightforward process", he says. "Within 2-3 days we had a working model".

However, it quickly became clear that many of the process steps the team had been using were no longer necessary.

"As we became more familiar with the software, we could see that many of the checks we had put in place as part of the manual process were no longer necessary because the solutions automatically captured all the data", Andrews says. "Within three weeks, we had re-written the initial model to be more streamlined and efficient. And it only took two of us working part time".

This streamlining helped the IT department achieve a key mission: to ensure high quality for all of the company's growing web of business-critical applications. The initial fear that the mission would increase their workload exponentially soon subsided after working with Original Software. Ageas 50 have managed to keep their team small, contain costs, and increase test efficiency by no less than 125% in the first year.

Original Software

After the planning is over, Ageas 50 can now count on consistent results. In the past when they were running tests manually, the same test would often give different results.

"We would have to run them time and time again to find out why and, typically, it would be that there were slight differences in how the tests were conducted. With TestDrive, we have an audit trail and can be sure we are running exactly the same test each time", says Andrews.

Finally, information provided by the tools has allowed the team to shift their focus from execution to analysis.

"Historically we were so busy running the tests that we had little time to step back and think about what we actually needed to test", says Jewell. "We work smarter now. The tools give us the information we need to prioritise testing according to the business impact, risk, urgency and likelihood of problems occurring".

Productivity improvements equivalent to five FTE's

"In total our workload has increased by around 65% and we've only added one additional headcount", says Jewell. "I estimate that having the solutions in place has delivered productivity improvements that are equivalent to the work of five analysts."

The new testing tools have also made it easier for Ageas 50 to get support from the vendor of their sales and administration application.

"When we raised a problem with its support team previously we would often be told that they couldn't recreate it and needed more information", Andrew says.

"Within 3-4 weeks of having the Original Software tools that push-back disappeared, because we were able to record and track the entire test, and give them the evidence they needed to recreate the problem."

> ❝ *Original Software were head and shoulders above the rest*

"We work smarter now"

The whole testing process has in fact improved. It is easier to plan and schedule, tests are more consistent and auditable, and information provided by the tools allows them to shift from a tactical to a more strategic approach.

In the past, test plans had been unpredictable. Ageas 50 used to spend between two and four days a week adjusting them.

"The Qualify product has made planning unbelievably easier," says Jewell. "Now it takes about ten minutes a week. And what's even better is that the test teams can manage their own workloads. It's easy for them to access Qualify and prioritise tasks themselves".

More good things to come

Ageas 50 now has a stable test environment, but Jewell is well aware that there is more powerful functionality in the Qualify and TestDrive tools to be taken advantage of.

"We now have a highly productive and stable testing environment", he says. "But we are still evolving it".

Ageas 50 are gradually reusing automated tests to accelerate the roll-out of additional test scripts. They are also planning to exploit other functionalities, such as being able to use scrambled production data for testing and the ability to recreate tests by rolling back the data.

"The Original Software products are easy to install and offer brilliant value for money, Jewell says. "The tools have proven so successful that, based on the results of our implementation, another division within the group has adopted them. And the support we get is superb. I just wish all our suppliers would respond as efficiently, effectively and quickly".

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