

Turning Agile

Sogeti helps application development align with business requirements

Summary

From a single classified section in the 1966 Brighton telephone directory, Yell has grown into an international operation serving 1.4 million advertisers. Much of the growth has come from acquisitions, great brand recognition and innovative use of information technology.

Today, alongside the printed editions; the firm offers a range of advertising products via the Internet and both fixed and mobile telephone services. Behind the scenes, Yell makes extensive use of advanced enterprise resource planning, business intelligence and web based services to deliver a diverse range of products available in multiple languages across the globe.

The process of maintaining, developing and releasing new and innovative products is a complex and time consuming task of which application testing is a critical element. Sogeti has worked closely with Yell in the UK to ensure that its products are delivered with high quality and within acceptable time frames. This has been achieved through;

1. The cultivation of a deep partnership over a long period of time, ensuring that Sogeti understand Yell's business.
2. The adoption of Sogeti's Test Management services which are critical to the success of Yell's high value projects and programmes.
3. Leading the adoption of best practice for testing within an Agile/Scrum Development methodology.

This relationship with Sogeti has delivered significant financial returns to Yell's business benefits and continues to improve its ability to deliver innovative, business critical projects on time and within budget.

The Client

Yell offers quality business leads and marketing solutions to small and medium sized enterprises in the United Kingdom, the United States, Spain and some countries in Latin America. Yell Group products and services are delivered by a team of approximately 13,000 people generating group revenues of £2,123 million in FY 2009/10.

"Sogeti has helped us to meet critical deadlines and ensure that our QA teams are staffed by experts with a good understanding of our business processes without incurring costly and time consuming recruitment overheads."

Adam Williams
IS Test & QA Group Manager, Yell UK

The Challenge

In the UK, its products and services include the Yellow Pages printed directories, the Yell.com website and "118 247" operator-assisted telephone information service.

In the US, Yell Group offers the Yellowbook printed directories and the yellowbook.com online classified directory. In Spain, the firms products and services include Paginas Amarillas and Paginas Amarillas.es, and in Latin America, a range of similar printed and online directories.

Within such a multinational and forward thinking organisation, innovative and reliable Information Technology is a critical requirement for sustained growth and profitability. As a data centric business, many of its key systems need to be highly integrated and able to deal with surges in usage and complex data mining and migration tasks. The business and technology teams at Yells' headquarters in Reading are responsible for much of the development, testing and support of

multiple applications used by the group. From sales, through to production and distribution systems, Yell has a highly customised set of web-based and mobile applications leveraging enterprise software platforms like Oracle and SAP.

The Information Systems Test Center (ISTC) comprises of a team of testers, developers and project managers who help deliver projects that are aligned with the requirements of the business. Adam Williams, IS Test and QA Group Manager for Yell in the UK explains, "We are mainly project based and getting the right calibre and quality of people to work on short duration projects can be a difficult and time consuming task."

Selecting Sogeti

Given the specialisation required to ensure that critical software projects are delivered to a high quality, Yell approached Sogeti in 2005 to review their QA processes and make recommendations to improving them. Sogeti was then able to provide a managed test service that greatly reduced the cost of the testing effort as well as ensured that the quality of the products being delivered was high.

Sogeti then changed its service provision in line with Yell's requirements to provide flexibility within its staffing levels and to ensure consistency in the quality of team members. Sogeti works closely with Yell Test Management to allow consultants to quickly come into the firm and provide technical skills and business knowledge that ensure projects are delivered as required.

"We initially selected Sogeti based on its proven ability to deliver high calibre people in organisations with similar requirements to ours," explains Williams, "And five years later, we now have a partnership that has helped us to deliver many successful projects that have provided significant benefits to the business."

The Solution

One such example is the White Pages Project, which is a major software driven initiative to reorganise how Yell shows client data in its Yellow Pages book product. The project needed to go live within business critical time frames and required additional skilled QA consultants. Although it was high priority, the existing QA team would still need to maintain its current workload as well as working on the project.

"This was a great example of where Sogeti was able to deliver value to us through project managers organising our testers to work alongside the development team to deliver the project to the business on time and with a high degree of accuracy against the business requirements."

Adam Williams
IS Test and QA Group Manager, Yell UK

The project was delivered with the help of Sogeti's Test Management, business knowledge and Agile/Scrum Methodology know-how. Having helped to lead the initiative from Waterfall to Agile, Sogeti was well placed to provide the technical testing capability in iterative development techniques that were required to deliver this project.

The key facets of Sogeti's service provision were;

- **Rapid mobilisation** - engaged stakeholders efficiently at the start so that their needs were considered and unknown needs recognised.
- **Short cycles** - meant that useful deliverables are available frequently and continuously and therefore are visible and available to stakeholders, which meant that there was regular and frequent feedback.
- **Teamwork style** was open with low overhead, focused, joint commitment and ownership.
- **Managing priorities** between the strategic goal and the short cycle goal becomes more effective. The approach facilitated regular

and frequent appraisal of risks and priorities from a software quality perspective.

- **Support for Test Driven Development:** the great thing about this approach is there is agreement up front as to what will be the acceptable and exactly how it will be confirmed, ensuring that the provider confirms before delivery.

“The move to an agile method from a waterfall approach has largely been a result of our work with Sogeti,” explains Williams, “By having a core team of Sogeti consultants who are able to come into the business at short notice and hit the ground running, we have been able to transition our processes while keeping only a relatively small core team of senior testers in-house.”

The Benefits

The new agile approach requires even more flexible resources along with technical knowledge and awareness of the Yell’s application. In response to this Sogeti is able to provide staff augmentation services that match the rapidly changing needs of Yell’s technology services requirements.

With an average recruitment cost of approximately 15% of each individual’s salary excluding bonuses and benefits, the long-term financial savings made at Yell through its Sogeti partnership is significant, “and this does not include the valuable knowledge transfer and ongoing training that Sogeti provides that keeps the quality of the teams at the highest level.”

“As our business expands into newer digital areas such as mobile applications and interactive services, testing remains a critical element,” Williams comments, “having a trusted partner to provide the resources we need to meet the drivers of the business is a relationship that is essential to help us rein in costs and deliver these critical applications on schedule.”

Conclusion

The relationship with Sogeti has helped Yell create an application development environment that is closely aligned to the requirements of the business.

Yell ISTC continually prove their value to the business by delivering high quality software that has helped Yell establish themselves as leaders in the market place. Sogeti is proud to support this effort through demonstrating how QA can become a value add to the business by delivering critical applications in a timely and accurate manner with out incurring huge staffing costs.

As the next generation of applications come online, Sogeti will continue to work closely with Yell to ensure that business priorities are met while the valuable knowledge is retained and enhanced for the benefit of the business.

Contact us

To learn how Sogeti’s Testing Solutions can help organisations achieve their testing and QA goals, please visit: www.uk.sogeti.com or contact your local testing representative for more information:

Paul Collins
Sector Head, Commercial & Retail Services
E: paul.collins@sogeti.com
T: 0 207 014 8900
M: 0 782 562 5001

