SHOWCASING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND ADVANCES IN SOFTWARE TESTING

LogiGear Magazine

TALENT SOURCING
THE STATE OF OUTSOURCING TODAY

Halliburton’s Last Mile To Continuous Delivery
LogiGear Staff

Why Onshore Vs. Offshore Isn’t The Right Question
Andy Sealock

When You Need Testers Now, Who Can You Trust
Joe Luthy
Every organization goes through times when the internal, or home team, cannot execute the testing project easily or quickly enough. The reasons are many, from the lack of an effective test strategy to low automation engineering skill, to staff positions going unfilled due to a great job market. With everyone working and very few people to fill positions, development teams are searching for more and more ways to be leaner and meaner, outsourcing more of their work.

I have worked in many outsourced capacities and engaged with many organizations, individuals and teams as an outsourced consultant. Today, about half my work comes from strategy and test process consulting for other organizations. I am also involved with a professional services team whose work is completely outsourced. LogiGear itself does the majority of its work as an offshore outsourced service organization.

The question is no longer if you should outsource, it’s how, how much and what should be outsourced. Figuring this out can be difficult.

Staffing flexibility, getting the right skill at the right time, getting expert help, advice and experience is the norm, and in an increasing number of organizations it is expected. Bring in the most talented experts to get the job done right. In the software development business, getting the right testing and QA skill set, experience requirements, and technical requirements is an increasingly difficult task. Outsourcing is a way to bridge the gaps.

The speed of Agile development and rapid delivery of product of all varieties from downloads to SaaS, makes the time pressure more intense. As a result, a wider variety of services are being outsourced to get the product out the door quickly. Consulting, coaching and other professional services are a great way to increase productivity, automate more and streamline process as well as update practices in strategy, such as action-based testing (ABT) and behavior-driven development (BDD). Getting outside help to make excellent and effective, low maintenance test automation has enabled many organizations to leap to higher levels of productivity with increased confidence in the test effort. This is where testing has moved and it makes sense to get help to move your own team higher.

In this issue we provide tips and tactics on how to set yourself up for success with outsourcing as well as articles that discuss the direction of IT outsourcing in general. We also have a wealth of past issues, articles, Top 10 lists and information about outsourcing, offshoring, and professional services to augment and super-charge your work force. Take advantage of them.

We’ve also just published our 2015 editorial calendar to give you an idea of what’s ahead for next year, and as always, if you’d like to submit an article, just let us know.

All of us at LogiGear Magazine wish you a joyful and healthy holiday season and a happy new year. We look forward to continuing providing you great software test information in 2015!

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LogiGear solicits content from new authors and QA and test engineers who would like to share their knowledge and expertise. We encourage the next generation of thinkers and practitioners in software quality and testing to get published! Articles can be original works or previously posted articles on blogs, websites or newsletters but must be recent. Articles can be in the form of features, tips and hints, testing instructions, motivational articles or software testing practices.

March - API and Web Service Testing
June - Mobile Testing
September - Test Strategy and Methods
December - Test Automation

Link to LogiGear 2015 editorial calendar:

ARMY COLLABORATION PRODUCES NEW TEST STATION FOR MISSILE WARNING SYSTEM

The Common Missile Warning System (CMWS) helps protect Army aircraft from attack by shoulder-launched missiles and other threats. Before new updates are fielded they are thoroughly tested to make sure the software performs as expected. Thanks to collaboration between researchers at the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) and the Army Reprogramming Analysis Team (ARAT), that testing is done in a new integrated support station that puts the software through its paces under conditions simulating actual aircraft operation. If the system determines that there is a threat, it controls the dispensing of countermeasures quicker than a pilot would be able to detect the threat and respond manually.

Source: www.news.gatech.edu

BEST BUY’S WEBSITE GOES DOWN ON BLACK FRIDAY

Best Buy’s website suffered a prolonged outage on Black Friday. Best Buy spokeswoman Amy von Walter said a spike in mobile traffic triggered issues led Best Buy to shut down the website “in order to take proactive measures to restore full performance.”

The holiday shopping season is highly competitive, especially for the Black Friday weekend when retailers like Best Buy aim to lure consumers with door buster deals. Such promotions are often popular in the consumer electronics space, where deals focus on televisions, tablets and other tech gadgets.

Source: www.fortune.com
Halliburton’s Last Mile to Continuous Delivery

How Halliburton leveraged outsourcing to achieve their goals.

By LogiGear Staff

Organizations are focusing on speed, both in Continuous Integration and rapid deployment as a competitive advantage. Many software development organizations can significantly shorten development cycles by implementing one or a combination of Agile practices, continuous integration & deployment methods, and feature branches. While these frameworks and techniques shorten development cycles, test teams can quickly fall behind in keeping up with the velocity of product releases. Getting assistance from the outside can be crucial to the success of the entire development organization.

This case study details how Halliburton leveraged LogiGear’s Professional Services team to develop a comprehensive test automation strategy for their Agile teams, and leverage test automation and application lifecycle management (ALM) tools across the organization. The approach and strategic implementation resulted in a significant reduction in test cycles over prior releases, increased capacity of the test team, and minimized costs using outsourced test automation and Professional Services resources.

Background

Halliburton develops software applications that are extremely complex, with millions of lines of source code, N-Tier architecture and message queuing. The complex nature of the software requires extensive testing and significant resources. When the Production Enhancement (PE) software technology organization adopted continuous integration practices, it became apparent that the current approach to testing needed to change radically to meet deliver expectations.

Cheronda Bright took over the PE testing group at Halliburton shortly after the development team implemented feature branches. The main product team worked on functional enhancements in the development branch while the user experience team made updates to the user interface in a separate feature branch. Features from each branch were merged frequently, which significantly increased the testing workload.

In the past, after every two-week development sprint the software was handed over to the test team that executed all testing manually. New tests were created and run along with any necessary system integration regression testing. Test results were sent to the product management and development teams in order to prioritize fixes to software bugs. After the bugs were addressed the software was sent back to the team for verification testing. When the product management and development teams were satisfied with the results, the software was placed into production.
Testing Challenges

Cheronda knew from previous experience that the only way for testing to keep pace with a continuous integration model was to automate as much of the testing as possible. However, the solution it would not be as simple as just automating tests. The vision was to implement a solution that would result in a truly integrated development environment.

Even though the teams had adopted many Agile practices, collaboration was still a challenge due to separate process management platforms in use. Microsoft Team Foundation Server (TFS) was used by the development team for source control, and user story and bug management by scrum masters and product managers. The test team used Hewlett Packard’s Quality Center (QC) for test management, execution and status reporting. A significant issue for the test team was not having a reliable way to stay updated on what changes were made to the software other than direct communication with the developers. This often resulted in testers creating and running tests that duplicated previously done unit testing.

To begin, Cheronda asked both her testing team and the development team for their input on what they saw as essential to make the project a success. The test team was struggling to keep up with the additional testing required, and the product management team wanted to significantly shorten release cycles while increasing scope. So it was no surprise that reducing testing time for the 3,000 test cases was the top requirement for both teams, along with maintaining quality. The development team also wanted to see testing of impacted code changes executed automatically after each build. And both teams wanted better visibility and reporting for all aspects of the project.

Solution Selection

The first step was to determine if it was possible to implement a common platform for all teams. Ultimately it was determined the Visual Studio/TFS/MTM (Microsoft Test Manager) Integrated Development Environment (IDE) had the potential to improve collaboration across the teams. Using traceability would allow testers to select specific test suites and create test configurations based on the project plan in TFS, and give the entire scrum team access to the project plans and testing strategy in order to create any number of detailed test status reports.

The next step was to identify a viable test automation solution. Cheronda was familiar with keyword testing and made it a requirement that any tool considered would need to support a keyword test method. After evaluating a number of tool options the team settled on TestArchitect from LogiGear. The tool supports Action Based Testing (ABT), an advanced keyword method, and the testing framework provided plug-in integration with both TFS and MTM. Besides TFS/MTM integration, a major factor in the selection was that LogiGear’s Professional Service team was also able to provide implementation support and training for the testing team.
Implementation

Test automation added a level of complexity and required a new way of approaching testing for the PE test team. Going forward, there would be a manual test team and an automation test team working together in close collaboration with the development team.

Cheronda worked with LogiGear Professional Services to develop the project plan and direct various parts of the project through the initial ramp-up. The challenges that had to be addressed included:

- Implementing test automation without impacting project schedules
- Analyzing manual tests in Quality Center
- Training the test team on Action Based Testing and the TestArchitect automation tool
- Training all testers on MTM
- Migrating manual tests from QC to MTM Automating manual tests and validating each one before moving them into production
- Setting up tests to run unattended by auto-deploying the execution as apart of the build definition and Continuous Integration processes
- Creating detailed status reports that included images and log files on failure
- Defining the workflow between the manual and automation teams

To begin the project, two Halliburton managers were assigned to be automation leads. These individuals worked with the LogiGear team to identify tests that would be the most beneficial to automate. From 3,000 test cases, 600 were selected for automation. The initial test design and automation work of creating tests using the ABT method was outsourced to LogiGear’s automation engineers. Leveraging LogiGear’s automation expertise allowed the PE test team to continue ongoing testing in parallel with the creation of the action library.

While the automation team worked on test creation, LogiGear’s project manager worked closely with the PE configuration management team to integrate TestArchitect with TFS and MTM. As the automated tests were completed, they were checked-in into TFS. A beta test was performed by creating a test plan and then selecting and running tests from MTM on a single machine. After verifying the success of the execution from the Microsoft IDE, the team configured seventeen virtual machines with various setups in order to limit the time to run a full suite of tests to no more than 5 hours.

Next, the team focused on migrating manual tests from QC to TFS. The Halliburton project manager asked LogiGear to investigate the potential of automating the migration. Within a short time, LogiGear’s software development developed a program to automate the migration of tests from QC to MTM.
In parallel with the test automation effort LogiGear trainers provided hands-on instruction in test design and the correct approach for building complex tests required for the PE toolkit. At times the instructors worked alongside individual testers to develop the ideal test solution.

**Outcome**

LogiGear automation experts worked with the Halliburton team to create a test automation infrastructure consisting of the TestArchitect automaton tool, Microsoft’s TFS and MTM. The PE test team was also trained on the ABT test method that was implemented for both manual and automated testing.

After automating 600 tests, the regression suite that had previously taken eight weeks to complete was run in five hours with TestArchitect using a combination of seventeen virtual and physical machines. The migration to TFS/MTM provided managers and all team members with a much greater level of visibility across the entire project. The work improved testing and team collaboration and met the primary objective of delivering very short-cycle releases by facilitating testing for Continuous Integration deployment, multiple branches and variations.

LogiGear’s test team works one sprint behind software development and provides release notes with every new build delivered. The Halliburton team certifies every test delivered by LogiGear before they are moved to production. This verification step is completed within five hours by utilizing up to 70 virtual machines.

**Summary**

Halliburton’s PE team embarked on a project to make Continuous Integration and rapid delivery possible. By leveraging test automation and testing expertise and talent from outside their organization they were able to achieve their objectives and implement a sustainable testing solution that allows rapid, high quality testing. The partnership between Halliburton and LogiGear Professional Services proved to be a winning combination.
Why Onshore Vs. Offshore Isn’t the Right Question

Enterprises elect to bring offshore or outsourced operations in-house for a number of reasons. While performance certainly can play a role, motivation also includes strategic business reasons and a belief that the enterprise can perform the function better and more cost effectively than the service provider. Or, maybe it’s convinced that the value generated by increased service quality (via shorter cycle time, reduced error rate, better customer satisfaction) that’s, in theory, achieved by performing functions in-house will more than offset the increase in costs.

This cost gap might be closed further by better productivity of in-house resources relative to offshore, eliminating the management overhead associated with offshore operations, and continued increases in labor rates in offshore markets.

Some enterprises are also driven by the public relations benefits and goodwill that can come by communicating that they’re creating jobs in the US instead of shipping them overseas. Apple’s moves to do more on-shore development are a prime example.

These are all potentially valid reasons. However, a rational, defendable choice – as opposed to emotional or “gut-feel” reactions – requires an objective analysis and quantification of costs, risks, and value generated.

There’s no shortage of press on offshore outsourcing deals gone bad, and one of the most common reasons I hear for moving work back to the US is that the relationship with the current vendor or service delivery performance has deteriorated – potentially to the point of contract breach.

While outsourcing relationship breakdowns are sometimes due solely to vendor performance, in most cases these situations are two-way streets, with plenty of blame to go around. Common causes for relationship breakdown include:

• Deficiencies of the staff involved
• Incomplete or poorly designed processes/policies
• Gaps in the contract governing the relationship
• The enterprise under-investing in the vendor management and governance function
• Poor execution of the roles and responsibilities under the outsourcing contract

If these issues aren’t addressed, simply moving the function in-house may do very little to address the performance problems and will most likely increase costs - - the worst of both worlds.

In my experience, most offshore provider staffers have adequate (perhaps even excellent) credentials and expertise. Most service-related issues stem from difficulty in managing these resources, especially problems in communicating requirements and offering feedback on quality. Blame a number of factors, including cultural differences, language barriers, time zone management, and attrition. However, when taking a hard look at what investment the client made in people, processes, and...
technologies to mitigate these obstacles, there may be gaps.

Managing offshore resources effectively and efficiently is admittedly a difficult task, but companies that work to address the problems can get access to quality services at price points that still cannot be matched with in-house resources.

The Onshore and Insourcing Business Case

To make a positive business case for onshoring, the effort has to create significant value (much of it “soft”) to overcome the “hard” and easily quantifiable cost advantages provided by offshore service delivery. Ask yourself:

- Can you demonstrate that some costs will be mitigated by improved productivity – more and better results from fewer people? This can be a particular challenge given stiff competition for the skilled personnel who will need to be hired, retained, and developed.

- Will any remaining cost gap be closed by the bottom-line contribution of increased onshore service quality via reduced cycle time, lower error rate, reduced downtime?

- Will the benefits of onshoring translate into increased revenue or cost reductions in other areas of the business? Examples are operations, marketing, sales, manufacturing – think of places to generate margins, justifying the increase in net costs of moving from offshore to onshore.

Separate the overall outsourcing model from specific vendor performance. Maybe you just need a new partner, as opposed to bringing a function in-house.

Don’t forget to include one-time transition expenses as well as ongoing costs. Maybe you have to hire new talent, or run a search for a US service provider with the proper skills.

The reality is that offshore outsourcing will remain a viable option for most enterprises and it would require a massive shift to rapidly change that balance. Forrester’s 2012 Forrsights Services Survey showed 26 percent of companies plan to implement or expand the use of offshore resources for IT services. And Deloitte’s 2012 Global Outsourcing and Insourcing Survey shows 51 percent of respondents’ outsourced IT services were provided offshore, and 70 percent of future planned IT outsourcing would be provided offshore. These surveys are indicative of the continued acceptance by US enterprises of outsourced offshore operations even in the light of high-profile instances of insourcing and onshoring.

Decisions about outsourcing and offshoring are rarely simple or quick, and they won’t get easier as there are more options from SaaS and cloud. But don’t lose sight of the real question: What’s the optimum mix for the business need?

(This article was originally published on InformationWeek - http://www.informationweek.com/strategic-cio/it-strategy/outourcing-why-onshore-vs-offshore-isnt-the-right-question/d/d-id/1112689)

Andy Sealock has over 15 years of experience in leading large, complex outsourcing transactions and strategic sourcing programs. In managing projects for Fortune 500 clients, including several deals in excess of a billion dollars in value, he has been instrumental in helping clients innovate and maintain competitive advantage. He has a Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering from Virginia Tech University and an MBA from Seton Hall University. He can be reached at asealock@paceharmon.com.
When You Need Testers Now, Who Can You Trust

Options for getting outsourced testing help when you need it most.

By Joe Luthy

There are times when organizations need to increase testing for a regular release, to meet a deadline or some unexpected occurrence, but it doesn’t justify expanding the inside team. The options are to quickly find someone for a short term contract, or depending on your application, explore crowdsourcing or go with an outsourced / offshore service provider that offers flexible staffing. Here are a few of the considerations that can help you when you need help right away.

Sourcing Options

Filling a contract position is not significantly different than hiring a full-time employee. Going this route lets you be very specific about the requirements and skills, and you have a chance to interview the candidates to verify they have what you need. The disadvantage is that this takes time, and onboarding one or more contractors is not advantageous when you need to ramp-up testing quickly.

Lately crowdsourced testing has gained attention as a way to quickly scale usability testing with a relatively fast turnaround. Crowdsourced testing has been around quite a while. It has been an extremely popular method for final or public beta testing and for testing gaming software. Even now it doesn’t take much more than a challenge to break software and free pizza to get a bunch of gaming fanatics lined up outside your door.

Crowdsourcing has grown in popularity with the explosion of mobile development and the need to test a multitude of devices, operating systems and wireless networks. But like all things, there are trade-offs that must be considered when determining if this is the route to go.

Who are the testers? Testers in the crowd come from different backgrounds, and possess different levels of experience. They can range from college students and employed testers looking to supplement their income, to individuals who previously worked full-time as testers and now prefer flexible work opportunities. Since they are freelancers, they can be available all times of the day, and on short notice.

One of the attractions of crowdsourcing is the potential to test public websites, mobile applications, software, or video games on a wide range of hardware devices, and different software/hardware configurations. However, good results will be dependent upon creating very detailed requirements up front. Even then, the consistency in the quality of the work may vary. There is also the possibility that test reports may not be uniform and contain duplicate bugs, which may require extra time to sort and validate the accuracy of the test results.

Security risks need to be evaluated carefully prior to releasing a project to the crowd. Giving a large number of users access to pre-release products can be risky. If there’s something special about the software, the secret could be blown or if it’s a really cool new app or feature, there’s the risk it gets talked about before you’re ready, giving the competition a heads-up. There’s always a chance the leak about a bug could get adverse publicity. While these are extreme scenarios, they do need to be taken into consideration.

When you have specific requirements and need to get going right away, working with a traditional outsourcing firm can get you to your goals quickly. Outsourcing firms...
will have testers with skills you are looking for and that likely have experience testing very similar applications. This benefits you by speeding testing, and having testers who are able to accurately identify and report issues. When you have very specific hardware/software requirements outsourcing firms can work with you on the best way to configure them for testing. And, depending on your needs, they may be able to automate a portion of the testing.

Most outsourcing firms are able to perform rigorous testing and help solve engineering problems. They also have standardized procedures and are able to validate workflows and a variety of user scenarios and can work with you to ensure the test coverage you need.

Assuring the Best Outsourcing Experience

Approached correctly, outsourcing on a temporary or as needed basis can be seamlessly integrated with in-house teams. The key is establishing good relationships. The bottom line is that people do business with people, not companies. And the preference is to do business with people you know and trust. Trust starts with confidence. Having open dialogue and discussion with the project managers is a good way to gain confidence that they can do what you expect. From there, starting with a proof of concept will be a gauge of how a larger project will go.

Outsourcing will, in many cases, force organization and process improvement. You need to communicate all aspects of your testing process including your communicating methods, status reporting, test case management and defect tracking in part or in whole to the testers working on your project. In a lot of organizations all of this may be getting done, but may not be well defined. Getting things organized and documented enough is essential to make outsourcing as efficient as possible, and will also benefit current teams.

An often overlooked aspect in outsourced testing is training testers on the application. Testers with excellent testing skills will produce smarter tests and better results when they have a good understanding of the system under test. Training doesn’t have to be extensive, but it can make a big difference in the results you get.

The individuals in-house who will be managing and/or working with offshore test teams can also benefit from training in the area of communication. The tech sector is highly cross-cultural. Being aware that there are differences in how communication is interpreted can avoid misunderstanding and friction.

Summary

From all the industry reports, the need for software testers will continue to grow, which means a lot of competition for skilled testers. For testers this isn’t a bad thing, but it can make it difficult for organizations to ramp-up testing quickly. In this environment it’s likely more organization will need to explore an outsourcing option at some time or another. Understanding your options and the key considerations will help you put together the right plan when you need testing talent in a hurry.

Joe Luthy is the Marketing Director for LogiGear. Joe has over 10 years experience in product marketing for enterprise IT applications and mobile devices.
Four Steps to a Successful Service Engagement

Using an outsourcing firm with technical know-how and sound processes adds value from the very beginning.

By Subu Baskaran

Flexible outsourcing, in particular offshoring, can make the difference in achieving business goals within the boundaries of time and budget. Organizations rarely have a predictable, steady flow of work. Most test teams are under extreme pressure to get new products released and are working within highly compressed timelines. Hiring more staff is seldom an option, and even when it is, its time consuming, and even more so if when specialized skills or experience is required. Outsourcing, when used optimally, not only reduces the cost but also bolsters the existing processes and adds value in areas that are otherwise untouched.

Organizations that are aware of the mindset and needs of current employees find better success in outsourcing. By knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the existing teams and identifying areas that need additional heavy-lifting, these companies are able to seamlessly integrate a strategic outsourcing partner into their existing ecosystem. Making internal teams aware of the rational for additional resources makes them part of the decision process and helps secure their buy-in.

Using a strategic partner provides a lot of testing leverage. Internal teams that do both the strategic planning as well as the nitty-gritty of day to day testing can take up the supervisory role of providing the necessary direction and ensure the operational success of the engagement. Using an outsourcing firm to provide the right sets of skills, technical know-how and understanding of the processes involved adds value from the very beginning and does not require a lot of hand holding. Following are the keys to maximize the benefit of outsourcing.

1. Don’t Think Cheap, Think Low-cost

There is a huge difference between low-cost and cheap. Reputable outsourcing firms hire and train qualified employees who are evaluated on both the speed and quality of their work. Looking for a sound internal structure and a robust business model in an outsourcing service provider is a great first check-point for any organization that is looking for a partner. You will want project managers and test leads that you can interface with on a daily basis who take care of overseeing the test teams.

The quality of a service provider can sometimes be assessed through their cost. Service providers that get into a bidding war rarely produce good quality output in the long run. Organizations that associate cheap labor to outsourcing often end up hiring the wrong teams and ultimately spend a lot of money for poor service. A quality service provider will be able to justify their cost through their past customer engagements, referrals and their expertise.
2. Service Level Agreements (SLA) Confirm Understanding

SLAs set the correct expectations for both the provider and the client and go a long way to establishing a good working relationship throughout the term of the engagement. Properly written SLAs will define roles and responsibilities for both parties as well as the deliverables. Good SLAs work for the benefit of both parties and even help avoid unforeseen issues.

3. The Third Arm

For companies new to outsourcing, internal staff can be wary at the start of the relationship and inadvertently cause delays by holding back information due to fear of losing their jobs or just plain lack of trust in the service provider. When engaging an outsourcing partner, organizations must consider the vendor as a third arm. By utilizing proof of concepts and automation trial services companies can quickly evaluate many important requirements such as technical competency, reporting, communication and, last but not the least, the value that the vendor brings to the table. The vendor is there to help and not hinder. For a vendor to perform better, the service seekers should provide access to all the essential systems and ensure that the internal team cooperates. The time and energy invested at the start pays off in the long run. Employees who feel their jobs are secure are seen as forthcoming in a vendor engagement and build the much needed relationship for a seamless integration.

4. Think Strategic Problem Solving Partners

Organizations should look for strategic testing partners that can solve the problem. Services providers are often found through word of mouth or referrals. Companies can also engage with service providers that are well known in the industry at international trade shows and events. The outsourcing project should start internally based on the business goals of your organization. Cash crunched companies that embark on an outsourcing adventure often end up spending months researching and talking to vendors to eventually find out that the project may not get approved. Also, sometimes the teams lose focus and deviate from the original path of the need for the outsourcing partner. This not only drains resources but also hinders them in the current duties. Organizations seeking service providers should establish the business goals at both the micro-level and macro-level as this will save a lot of time. A step-by-step partnership process ensures that the business level goals and application level requirements are all clearly defined for the vendor to start adding value from day one.

Summary

An outsourcing relationship is not a cheap alternative but a strategic low-cost partnership. Organizations should embark on the journey with clear set of goals and take their time in finding a suitable partner. The engagement process should start with a great conversation where the service provider’s knowledge and skills are assessed. Service level agreements establish a good understanding between the companies and outline the responsibilities of both parties. Organizations should utilize benefits such as proof of concept, and promotional trial services for automation etc., which will give them the time to assess the technical competencies of a service provider. Strategic outsourcing/offshoring can add value by aiding you in achieving your business goals faster, with no compromise in quality and without disrupting your existing structure.

Subu Baskaran has over 11 years of experience in leading large, complex outsourcing projects both from onsite and offshore. He has a Bachelor’s degree in electronics and instrumentation engineering from Sastra University, India and an MBA from Cass Business School, London. He can be reached at subu@logigear.com
Get Help When You Need it

If you want to enjoy your job and not worry about lack of resources, or have old, outdated strategies, with failing or meaningless test automation - get help!

By Michael Hackett

We all know about globalization. Markets are global, products are global, mobile is global and software development is a global. As a result, the workforce is increasingly distributed and diverse. Home team, multiple away teams, based on skill, based on time zone, on locale, availability—there are many reasons.

With all the diversity and growing demand, good help is hard to find. And, there are an increasing number of situations where getting outside help is essential. From senior consultants and auditors to automation and test engineers, to brute force manual testers, there are many positions to fill. Needs range from building a new test strategy to test case production to executing regression testing, and the solutions to all of these will vary.

A successful outsource engagement is able to bridge any gaps between you and higher productivity, smarter testing, more cost efficient quality practices and higher customer satisfaction. Outsourcing is not the only way to get help. Not every people problem can be solved by hiring someone! But often, the best way to get a quick influx of expert ideas, skills, tools, automation or execution is to go outside your organization. A good consultant can implement simple solutions to complex problems to get you to higher levels of competency. If you encounter any of the situations below more than occasionally, maybe it’s time to get outsourced help.

- If you have no clear, defined test strategy, get help.
- If you let short-term release fluctuations interfere with your long-term strategy, get help.
- If you often run out of testing time, get help.
- If your testing and test coverage are not defined or varies too much from release to release, get help.
- If your test automation is hard to maintain, get help.
- If you have no test automation, get help.
- If your smoke tests are not automated and included in your Continuous Integration process, get help.

INFOGRAPHIC

230,000 Career Testers Worldwide

65% Employed as in-house testers (Nelson Hall)

35% Outsourced

+9% Year to Year Growth

91% of company execs report testing is a critical outsourcing task, however the numbers indicate in-house testers still do the bulk of testing — Pierre Audoin Consultants
Outsourcing Trends, It’s No Longer Just About Cost

The 2014 Outsourcing World Summit, organized by the International Association of Outsourcing Professionals (IAOP), shed some light on the technology trends that are shaping the outlook for outsourcing. Here’s a list of most significant drivers that are shaping “what’s next” for the future of technology outsourcing.

By Diana Kontsevaia

1. Cloud

Cloud technologies are going to get bigger. The move to cloud is driven by data analytics and will grow as executives figure out exactly what they need. Executives will have to learn what data to move to the cloud, how to do it, and how to do it securely. IT departments will be further split into providing functionality on one hand, and innovation on the other. In the future, there might also be more governance and new legislation concerning cloud technologies as they become a mainstream norm. For software development (and frankly anyone within the technology industry) expanding and working with cloud technologies will become crucial in the coming years.

2. SMAC and Big Data

The way businesses make decisions will soon change with the increasing number of different technology platforms used by customers and potential of collecting large amounts of data from these platforms to drive better business decisions. SMAC stands for Social, Mobile, Analytics, and Computing, and they are at the heart of Big Data. Data collected from SMAC can provide insights into your customers, competitors, and costs. It can also improve governance. Executives will need to figure out what kinds of data to collect, what their data is telling them, how to use it, but also how to protect their hard-won data. Along with the rise of benefits of using and collecting data, there will also be consent, privacy and other legal issues to be considered.

3. Omni-Channel Systems and Customer Centric Experience

The goal of working with SMAC and using Big Data effectively is ultimately to enhance customer experience. The idea behind omni-channel systems is essentially to take your business wherever your customers are, by providing a service that is integrated across many different platforms. Customers themselves expect a great deal of functionality and integration, and businesses need to start thinking about how to improve their technologies with regards to customer experience. The retail industry is spearheading the omni-channel transformation, with companies like Nordstrom coming out on top, but there is a lot of opportunity for innovation and improved efficiency for any company that finds a way to integrate various technology platforms and their user experience. Companies whose core business does not involve IT and systems integration will be forced to innovate and will greatly benefit by outsourcing such projects to specialized software providers.
4. Outsourcing for Talent

The issue of talent shortage is not new, but the question of skills availability and high turnover rates remains vital. To deal with the shortage of needed skills, many companies will turn to internal training, or set up strategic partnerships with insourcing or outsourcing providers. Yet other companies set up captive centers, onshore or offshore, in places where needed talent is available. The discussion of constant talent shortage is now also turning into a more self-aware understanding of how the industry treats talent and how the situation can be improved. Articles like “Is Talent a Severe Crunch” question how current views of talent and fluidity of skills influence the shortage of talent. Maybe once we engage the entire ecosystem of outsourcing we will be able to find the right people whenever we need to. For now, there are plenty of global outsourcing locations that have the skills to match almost any project need.

5. Outsourcing for Innovation

Outsourcing used to be all about cutting costs, but there is a new shift in understanding the real value outsourcing can bring to an organization. Outsourcing can now be used for innovation, or in other words, to gain additional revenue. If used strategically, outsourcing can become a lever that can help use new resources for new projects and help drive growth. CIOs are now realizing that money saved by outsourcing can be reinvested to enable growth and impact revenue - which is good news given that IT is increasingly expected to provide innovation and functionality. Outsourcing helps with two key things: (1) reallocation of capital and (2) access to new markets, both of which help free up budget and invest it where it can have higher returns. This view of outsourcing suggests that outsourcing will become a strategic executive decision with a potential for bringing bigger growth and innovation.

6. Partnerships based on Trust and Transparency

Outsourcing is increasingly considered to be a strategic decision and not just a cost-cutting solution. To use outsourcing most effectively, outsourcing professionals are increasingly looking for trusted partnerships and reliable and transparent outsourcing providers who will understand and help achieve their goals. In response, outsourcing providers are shifting from traditional outsourcing models and are offering more integrated approaches that allow buyers to retain more control and improve their processes. Here’s more info on different types of outsourcing models and how they evolved to meet the needs of the industry. The need for reliable and transparent partners will increase, as outsourcing promises to bring more innovation, revenue, improved technologies and better processes to companies everywhere.

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**Ethics in IT Outsourcing**

By The Higher Ed CIO

*Ethics in IT Outsourcing* by Tandy Gold is a surprisingly great read on the ethics in IT outsourcing as well as IT ethics and business ethics more generally. The reason it was a surprise is that the Gold tackles the ethics in IT outsourcing head on. From its roots in US economics and public policy through globalization, quickly linking the issues and trends to corporate ethics and IT ethics. The book is full of thoughtful lessons in ethics and morality faced by CIO’s at an increasing rate.

Although Gold’s focus is to connect everything to IT outsourcing, the majority of the analysis, arguments and recommendations are universal and would add tremendous value to every IT organization even if they are not currently using IT outsourcing or offshore services.

More important for CIO’s is Gold offers readers a very solid and well-rounded examination of IT outsourcing so that you can elevate your own philosophy on the practice. And given the rapidly changing business climate and financial pressures, every CIO will benefit from having a clear and defensible philosophy on IT outsourcing that does not rely on emotional arguments.

Gold begins with several very strong chapters which present the ethics of IT outsourcing from different perspectives. Gold positions the ethical issues as being societal, corporate and individual issues that are often misunderstood or misaligned as moral issues.

Gold artfully reminds readers that corporations and many organizations are not moral entities and that they have no moral obligations. That does not mean they are not required to act within ethical boundaries.

It means, as Gold argues, when it comes to IT outsourcing, IT managers have an ethical obligation to serve the interest of the investors and no obligation to protect American jobs. For readers in the public sector things are a little different, but not entirely.

*Ethics in IT Outsourcing* is not a theoretical book. Gold delivers a well-developed framework for managing the ethical challenges of IT outsourcing using an IT Ethics Program Management Office (IT Ethics PMO) which has universal benefits to all sourcing activities – onshore and offshore.

I really liked the IT Ethics PMO that Gold puts forward and believe traditional project management offices and IT procurement functions would benefit from adopting an ethics component based on Gold’s IT Ethics PMO.

Gold applies the IT Ethics PMO methodology to solving many of the common business issues of IT outsourcing when using offshore strategies. Gold presents strategies for integrating the IT Ethics PMO into an existing offshore program and starting one before any IT outsourcing has begun.

I do recommend *Ethics in IT Outsourcing* because it tackles the issues of IT ethics which is almost always a taboo subject. My recommendation is based on the book not being overly focused on IT outsourcing per se, but instead it serves as a guide to developing your own IT ethics program that may be used in making IT outsourcing decisions.

If you are a public college or university this is a very useful book to developing an IT ethics program to address every issue from using student workers to adding procurement requirements for green IT.

For public CIO’s *Ethics in IT Outsourcing* will also help you develop policies around the use of open source products and cloud computing from a public policy and an institutional mission perspective.

For every CIO, you will find useful ideas to start your own IT ethics PMO that will also help you strengthen your vendor management program. If you are currently using offshore IT outsourcing services, or plan to in the near future, you will find a solid framework for improving communications and the results you receive.

(This article was originally published on thehigheredcio.com - [http://blog.thehigheredcio.com/2013/02/17/book-review-ethics-in-it-outsourcing/](http://blog.thehigheredcio.com/2013/02/17/book-review-ethics-in-it-outsourcing/))
From the Archives

Over the years we’ve provided an extensive number of articles that provide a wealth of knowledge about outsourcing. Below are links to some of those articles.

**Avoid Epic Fail. Get Professional Help**
This article covers the benefits of using professional services team to get great test automation quickly.

**Outsourcing in VN**
The culture, stable economy and modern infrastructure make Vietnam ideal for an outsourcing destination. These articles provide more insight into the benefits Vietnam offers.
http://www.logigear.com/magazine/offshoring-outsourcing/jamie-tischart-shares-his-thoughts-on-the-testing-industry-in-viet-nam/

**Important Lessons Learned in 10 years of Offshoring**
Experience is an important factor in selecting an outsourcing partner. This article provides LogiGear’s experience in becoming an offshore testing provider.

**Top 10 Risks Leading Offshore Teams**
These articles outline the pitfalls of leading offshore teams and how to avoid them.

**Best Practices for Outsourcing/Offshoring**
There are ways that the pitfalls associated with outsourcing/offshoring software testing can be avoided or resolved.

**Tactics for Leading Offshore**
This article will set managers, who are new to leading offshore teams, up for success.
http://www.logigear.com/magazine/offshoring-outsourcing/tactics-for-successfully-leading-offshore-software-testing/

**September 2011 LogiGear Magazine: Outsourcing**
The September 2011 Magazine was entirely dedicated to offshoring and outsourcing.

**Professional Services:**
To get a jump-start on test automation, check out TestArchitect Professional Services.
http://testarchitect.logigear.com/professional-services.html

**Book: Global Software Test Automation**
This is a great primer that explains the benefits of automation in an easy-to-comprehend way for executives.

**Training Course: Working with Offshore Teams**
For those who want or need assistance in managing offshore teams, this course will give you what you need.