DVT and Inspired Testing talk chatbot at Quality Jam London 2018

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The Quality Jam QA Symphony conference saw an impressive line-up of speakers talking on a variety of topics, aimed at giving delegates an opportunity to learn new skills and access expert industry knowledge.

A project that tested and took live a new investment bot for South African banking conglomerate Nedgroup Investments was presented by software development and testing company DVT, under the banner of its UK counterpart Inspired Testing.

The presentation, called 'Using BDD to Test a Robotic Process Automation Solution', looked at the goals and challenges of the project, discussed project testing implementation using BDD and Agile, and included a brief project overview.

DVT was an integral part of this project team, which won The Banker Magazine Technology Projects of the Year 2018 award in the category of Artificial Intelligence and Robotics for Nedgroup Investments.

The project was also a finalist in the 2018 Gartner Eye on Innovation award, EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa).

The 45-minute information-sharing session at Quality Jam 2018, given by the inimitable Mario Matthee, showed how Nedgroup Investments was ultimately able to provide its customers with an automated savings platform through its 'Extraordinary Life' project. Extraordinary Life is an end-to-end digital journey that integrates artificial intelligence, chatbot, advanced investment algorithms, web and API development.

The platform utilises a chatbot – an electronic virtual assistant or EVA - designed to help Nedgroup Investments' clients achieve their financial goals through four investment choices – retirement, investing, personal goals and education. It is aimed at making investing easy and digital, while incorporating legislated financial governance. Sign-up is fast and paperless, and there are no advice fees, no admin fees and low investment management fees. There are also no forms to complete or long questionnaires. The client interacts with EVA through a series of questions and conversations, and a financial advisor is available should the user require help. Digital onboarding reduces the cost of starting investing by 90%.

> "We faced many challenges, such as distributed teams, being too Agile, red tape, complexity and volume of data, complex financial models and more. For example, there are 100+ different conversational flows a user can have with EVA, and hundreds of data flows for each one. It was a journey of growth and learning," says Matthee.

With the teams involved in the project being distributed in at least 3 locations in South Africa, as well as the UK, Czech Republic and India, it was essential that user requirements were understood by all roleplayers in the project cycle. This philosophy underpins the methodology of BDD, which helps to develop shared understanding between roleplayers. However, the methodology of Agile, which is a key tenet of BDD, relies on co-location, an impossibility given the team distribution. "We overcame these challenges by making use of our own flavour of Scrum. We utilised WebEx, Skype, Slack and WhatsApp, made sure we included calls where we could see one another, and increased the length of our stand ups and open-ended calls. Instead of being fixated on doing everything by the Agile book, we found our own path. In this way we became a powerhouse team. All the personalities started fitting and we built up momentum as we went along," says Matthee. As one delegate pointed out, this is a highly pragmatic approach.

> 'We used a gif of Homer Simpson running into a wall to show frustration. In a pressurised, serious environment, it's essential for team members to be able to show emotion in a light-hearted way'

There were many take-away learnings for Quality Jam delegates:

- It is totally possible for distributed, disparate teams to become very good at working together as one unit.

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- You can be Agile and still work in your own way.
- There is a place for manual testers in BDD.
- Give unusual applications of methodologies a chance.
- There is always a solution to a testing problem. Go back to your development team and rely on their expertise.
- Having the right people in the right job is more important than any methodology.
- Communication and collaboration are key components of a successful project.
- If your team does not suit the organisation's culture, there will be more delays. In this instance, there was extensive red tape, which is correct for a bank. The teams were able to work around and with these restrictions.
- It is possible to become too Agile. This will result in too many changes that put increased and sometimes unnecessary pressure on team members such as senior test analysts.
- Old school tools such as an Excel Macro are still a powerful option. "We used Mindmeister to convert the data to a macro, where we were able to generate the feature files and automation test cases," says Matthee.
- Identifying testing achievements in the initial stages of the project means that performance issues are found very early. At the beginning of this project, it wasn't possible to have 5 concurrent users on the bot in the beginning, whereas the client had identified an end target of around 50 concurrent users per day. By picking this up early, the team was able to enhance performance of the bot from the start.

"This project had the luxury of working directly with the business product owner, who was an integral part of the delivery team: answering questions, helping remove impediments, testing as functionality was released, logging defects, retesting fixes, informing project sponsors of the progress and providing motivation to the team, to mention a few," says Matthee.

> "The fact that the project won an international award is a great example of what can be achieved when you have the right people in the right positions for a project, working towards a common goal, and along the way challenging how projects are delivered."

Inspired Testing was a sponsor of the event, and used the opportunity to introduce its new branding to the industry. "Testing has always been an important part of the software development cycle. However, with the increase in adoption of Agile and DevOps, new demands have been placed on current testing strategies and approaches. Inspired Testing can not only help our clients formulate new test strategies, but provide guidance on the selection of optimal testing tools and frameworks. Most importantly, we help our clients deliver to their customers," says Roland Amm, Director: Delivery, Inspired Testing.

About Inspired Testing

Inspired Testing is a UK-based specialist testing company. We view quality as a key driver of software and ultimately of your business. Our strength lies in knowing how to structure, execute and automate testing. We use a unique combination of experience, technique and blended onshore offshore delivery capabilities. Our model, which includes a scalable resource pool of 250+ QA professionals, provides test automation and performance testing, as well as testing across most platforms, devices and environments. We provide a measurable return on investment and ongoing real-time results, in an environment where software must work perfectly, every time. www.inspiredtesting.com

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