

Quality Assurance Services



Executive Summary

Business catastrophes like major system outages, botched software deployments can be tied to the lack of effective software testing. The expanded complexity and distribution of today's systems brings a higher likelihood of far-reaching and serious errors – errors that tarnish reputations and impact revenue. This has added a lot of stress on ensuring quality of the applications, and the user's confidence in them. Thus testing from being an unfocused, unskilled and low priority process, has now become a strategic phase of the application development cycle, bringing a tremendous value-add to the business.

A growing trend among software companies is to focus on developing software, while outsourcing its validation. That is because outsourcing testing offers tangible business benefits. Outsourcing testing offers a scalable means for obtaining resources, expertise, and automated tools that meet the cyclical demands of testing. Taking it one step further is the concept of Offshore Outsourcing. Outsourcing testing offshore offers the above benefits, among them faster time to market, lower costs, access to high-level testing talent without hiring hassles, and more time to focus on core competencies.

This write-up is based on real experiences on projects at many different client engagements across a wide range of industries and company sizes. The paper outlines a simple process to address the typical offshore issues to help ensure success for your project.

QA Engagement Process for Offshore Outsourcing:

Similar to an on-site project, the key to the effective use of the offsite team is to begin the engagement with a kickoff session to familiarize the project manager and the primary offsite resources on the project team with the defined high level processes. Spending a few hours together initially going over the high points of the processes and procedures, roles and responsibilities, and communications expectations for the engagement will establish the ground rules and the foundation to commence the engagement.

The engagement process highlights the following best practices:

Methodology – Ensure that the offshore team understands the components of the methodology and processes that are key to establishing a good framework for testing effectiveness

Well defined, unambiguous roles & responsibilities – Clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities up front is key to ensuring your offshore team can keep pace with you

Communication Plan - Establish good communications practices

Knowledge Transition – Identify tools for knowledge transition. Ensure that the offshore team is familiar and has access to the tools to assist in the learning process

Set Reporting and Metrics – Reporting and metrics requirements expectations should be firmly established before work begins

Establish Test Tool Configuration and Usage Standards – This will allow the test management tools to be used in a consistent manor for maximum benefit.

A summary of high level Outsourcing Engagement process flow with offshore touch-points is as follows:

Managing Offshore QA Team

Primary difference in managing an on-site team and an offshore team is the thought and planning that needs to go into communication and processes and the need to enforce them rigorously. Communication methods and tools that we have effectively used in the past to successfully manage an offsite team include:

- **Hold daily handoff call with the offsite team.** It is important to have a call with the offshore team to discuss on-site progress and handoff tasks. The daily meeting also builds a sense of team.
- **Assignments, Q&A, Schedules and deliverables should be in writing.** It is important to have this in writing to both reinforce and solidify understanding between team members.
- **Use up-to date documentation.** It is important to provide project documentation (e.g. contact lists, escalation plan, tool standards, known bugs and issues etc.) to the offsite team that is accurate and up to date.
- **Use Webex or similar remote meeting software.** Use software for sharing presentations, application walkthroughs, demos and training.
- **Use software tools to capture screen shots and short video of defects.** Many times the defects are hard to recreate. To ensure clear understanding of defects and the steps to recreate the defects, the QA team can provide step by step screen shots or a recording of events leading to defects using different software available in the market.

Reporting and Metrics

In order to measure performance of QA Outsourcing it is essential to establish a baseline and collect accurate metrics to compare against this baseline. Existing QA performance data should be reviewed and compared to determine performance of in-house and Outsourced QA Testing.

Conclusion

Testing is recognized as a specialized functional area within the development lifecycle that is critical to business success. By virtue of its high skill focus, non-limiting attributes and independent nature, it lends itself as a prime candidate for offshore outsourcing. Delivering successful offshore outsourcing projects starts with taking a step back and establishing the rules of engagement with the offshore team.