

Customer Case Study

Idealoutcome

Idealoutcome, a reverse auction company, focuses on a new breed of software testing with Agitar Software to offer a better web-based trading experience to customers.

UK based Idealoutcome is an online reverse auction trading service providing a highly effective, quick, easy-to-use, low cost e-auction service for a range of products. Suppliers bid against each other in real-time to win business from clients, enabling purchasers to achieve best-price supply solutions for their requirements. Software constitutes the heart of Idealoutcome's business proposition. The use of Agitar's developer testing product streamlines the software development process, making it more usable and more reliable.

The Challenge: Creating a User-Friendly, Dependable Trading Environment

The web has established itself as a hugely popular modern trading tool for consumers and businesses alike. E-auctions are fundamentally open, fully recorded trading events, promoting best practices in procurement. As an extension of the exponential growth in internet-based transactions, e-auctions offer a specifically designed framework for purchasers and suppliers across multiple industries to buy and sell a range of products within a single, secure trading environment.

E-auctions are becoming increasingly central as a platform for purchasing departments to select providers of goods and services. Purchasers have been quick to seize on the benefits of being in control of the bidding process and of the cost savings that can be achieved. The growth in popularity of online auctions creates a need to provide software which provides new features while maintaining the speed and security customers are accustomed to.

Idealoutcome recognized that increased attention to quality and developer testing of its core software was the best way in which to improve auction performance and meet these demands.

"We saw testing as a way to fortify the processes involved in the ongoing development of our auction software. The certainty it gives us about the behaviour of our code gives us confidence to promote our software as a trusted trading tool," said Michael Joyce, Lead Developer at Idealoutcome.

Idealoutcome's standard tool – JUnit – did not provide the company with satisfactory results. The task of deciding which tests to run is done by the very person being tested. As Michael Joyce said, "It is like putting the Fox in charge of the Chicken Coop."

The Solution: Agitar's Software Quality Initiative with Business Benefits

Even though Idealoutcome was using JUnit for developer testing, it was not until an Agitar product demonstration in London that the company



Overview

Industry: Online Ecommerce

Challenge:

To improve the crucial software development phase of Idealoutcome's web auction interface and to enhance supplier and purchaser satisfaction within the online trading environment

Agitar's Solution:

Agitar's combined Agitator and Dashboard enterprise developer testing product

Key Benefits:

Robust, healthy software. Higher degree of standardization in the software development lifecycle, faster software development time, greater quality assurance, and value-add to the business through possibilities to enable future change

realized how much potential to improve existed. Understanding the immediate and long-term benefits of a testing solution that 'agitates' the code with multiple tests as it is being written, Idealoutcome purchased permanent access to Agitar's combined Agitator and Dashboard developer testing solution.

The developer immediately has the ability to verify the quality of a software unit before it is integrated with the rest of the system, ensuring that any bugs in the code are discovered and fixed immediately, when it's easiest and cheapest to do so. Idealoutcome software is now continuously subject to 30,000 daily tests created and run automatically by Agitator.

"Like many organizations, our success depends on an ability to develop and enhance software. Agitar has made it practical and even compelling for us to meet the most demanding customer requirements, enabling us to react quickly to changes that we need to make to maintain an efficient and secure trading resource. Use of Agitator means a shorter development cycle but it also means real transparency throughout the entire value chain, starting with the software development process but complimenting the need for transparency of information at customer level," Joyce continued.

By integrating quality from the first stages of software development, Idealoutcome's software has now become a business asset. Agitator has consolidated the software development cycle, offering the reality of a quality initiative that allows full scalability for product enhancement and the potential to reshape the auction trading environment as necessary.

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Multi-Benefits

Agitator and Dashboard allow Idealoutcome to learn more about its existing code base and to retro-fit quality where necessary. By enabling Idealoutcome to validate quality early in the development lifecycle and automatically enforce coding standards, Agitator helps the company understand complexity and where to deploy its resources for maximum return.

The Dashboard management tool provides a foundation for quality management based on metrics, facilitating easier and more proactive project management. Idealoutcome's customers may not see these benefits directly, but they do get a vastly improved online customer experience as a direct result of better written, tighter code.

For the developer, Agitator is multi-faceted. It is a time saving device that lets the Idealoutcome team think about what it needs to test rather than how it is going to be tested. Also, it offers an insight into how the code behaves and why, rather than making assumptions based on developer speculation.

Joyce explains, "It challenges developer instincts by clarifying where additional code is unnecessary, thereby saving a great deal of time and effort. Similarly, it will confirm that you do not in fact need to modify code where you may think this is required."

Measure of Success

Agitator and Dashboard act as a strong regulating force at developer level for mission-critical software development, affecting code quality, scalability, and resulting in improved product dependability. Having eliminated many of the problems associated with software creation, Idealoutcome has:

- Reduced the 'behind-the-scenes cost' of its web presence
- Lowered long-term IT spend considerably
- Continued to improve the customer experience

The efficiency of Agitar's solution safeguards operations at many levels. It allows Idealoutcome to keep the cost of future software development down while keeping its auction availability high. In turn, this frees up more IT budget for new online services and products.

Confidence and Growth

Idealoutcome plans to expand its use of Agitar's technology as the business grows. Agitar, who publish the details of their own software tests on their website, has launched Idealoutcome on a path to 'Open Quality' and towards a long-term commitment to making this quality visible to its customer base.

With a better, more usable and more reliable process, the practice of purchasing via online auction is set to continue. Idealoutcome sees real value in Agitator in terms of how it has focused the business on software quality. It is this enhanced quality that indirectly provides people with more confidence during online auctions and drives the buying process.

"Looking forward, having the Agitar tool in place will assist us in bringing new people on board to help with development work as the industry evolves," Joyce said. "The long-term benefit for us lies in being able to modify the risky areas of our code to become less so. Agitator already provides us with a complete database of understanding about our own software and with time, the quality assurance process will become increasingly demonstrable in other areas."

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