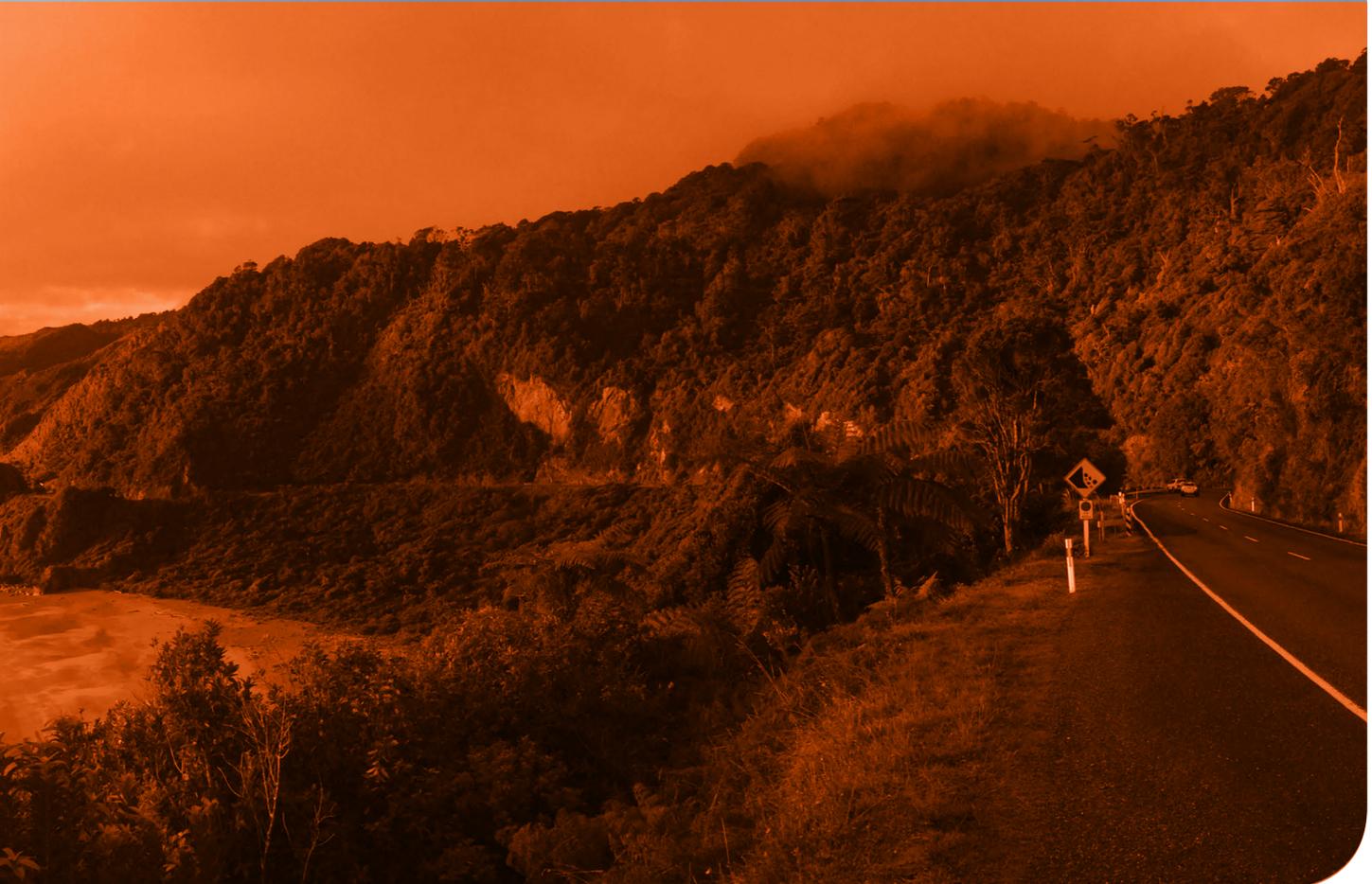NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY
WAKA KOTAHI

Qual IT success story

NZ Transport Agency

Need: The NZ Transport Agency needed an effective digital channel for customers to interact, transact and collaborate with them on any device.

Solution: A customer-driven refresh of the Transport Agency's main digital channel, www.nzta.govt.nz

Outcome: A successfully delivered project that's achieved increased customer engagement, making it easier, faster and cheaper to complete key activities.

Quality supports safe journey for the NZ Transport Agency

Keeping New Zealand moving

Most New Zealanders interact with the NZ Transport Agency on a daily basis. Whether it is driving some of the 11,000 kms of state highways they manage, accessing services like driver licensing or vehicle licensing, or being informed about travelling safely on our roads, the Transport Agency play a pivotal role in ensuring we move safely and efficiently across the country.

1,400 staff across 14 offices deliver these services, as well as a nationwide network of agents. Through the organisation's call centre the Transport Agency receives around 1.8 million calls annually, and another 2.2 million requests through website and social media channels. The core website has over 15,000 pages and represents an important channel for customers to access services like driver licensing, vehicle licensing and traffic information.

A strategic priority for the organisation over the next three years is to "make it easy for customers to do business with us". This means that the Transport Agency use their ". . . skills and expertise to understand customers' needs and find solutions that deliver services people really value at a cost that

makes sense." Ensuring their core website, www.nzta. govt.nz, supported this priority has been a significant initiative for the Transport Agency.

'Driven' by the customer

The Transport Agency started its website refresh project with a focus on the customer. "It was driven by the customer, the analytics were telling us not enough customers were completing activities they started online, or were coming in from Google and then leaving the site before completing any activity," says Linley Scammell, the Transport Agency project manager who led the initiative.

"There was an organisational shift to put the customer at the heart of what we were doing, and we wanted that reflected in the website," says Linley. Customer research was undertaken, with three key insights emerging.

First, customers wanted to focus on one task and get it done, for example registering their vehicle. They didn't want a lot of other content and other options, just a nice, easy pathway to completing the transaction. Second, the priorities of customers visiting the website were driver licensing, traffic and travel conditions, and vehicle licensing. Thirdly, it was all about mobile. Customers interviewed wanted to interact more and more with their mobile devices, and usage statistics supported that. The mobile experience was key.

"These three customer insights were the drivers – they led a lot of the design decisions, the content planning, the culture around the website, the internal communications, they drove everything," says Linley.

Building with agility

Drawing on these customer insights, the Transport Agency embarked on a major exercise to design a highly usable new website. "It's a big site with huge amounts of information, reference material and technical data, but we wanted to make it as uncomplicated as possible. We spent a lot of time and effort developing a pattern library (a collection of user interface design patterns) as a foundation to the project."

The Transport Agency engaged New Zealand company SilverStripe, providers of the common web platform available to all public sector agencies, to

Certainty is confidence

build the new site. Qual IT were appointed as the independent quality assurance advisers.

"We'd done the usability testing with customers so the focus of quality assurance at this point was extensive functional testing, and that the website worked well on mobile," says Linley. Qual IT provided advice on what devices and platforms the website should be tested for, which the Transport Agency combined with their own analytics data on existing use to develop an agreed approach.

A key to the project was integrating the testing into the agile development approach. "Having Qual IT on site with the development team was really important. Agile is always a challenge to set up, but Qual IT were quick off the mark to adapt. Over time

we had to work out how to balance development and testing resources so the project remained as efficient as possible," says Linley.

"The face to face communication was critical to the project, being able to co-locate a Qual IT resource in the SilverStripe office made a huge difference. It made it a more efficient process – communications can be long winded otherwise, and (an embedded resource) picks up insights almost by osmosis. There is also less room for misunderstanding or confusion."

Project delivers for customers

The Transport Agency has been able to deliver on its objectives for the project, says Linley. "We've achieved a huge increase in the number of people transacting on the site, making it faster and cheaper for them to access the services they need. There has also been a lot of positive feedback that the information is clear, logical and easy to find."

Qual IT's role has been important to achieving this outcome. "They've always been responsive, and worked well to balance potential risks against the timeframe for completing the project. Their understanding of all the different device types and how to efficiently test for them has been invaluable."

According to Tony Dale-Low, who headed the project for SilverStripe, it was one of the most successful they've been involved with. Working with Qual IT had been a positive experience.

"They were quite embedded, probably more so than many other agile projects you see. Qual IT retain their independence but also work collaboratively with us. It works brilliantly," says Tony.

SilverStripe use various approaches to quality assurance, sometimes using their own testing team and for other projects, engaging with independent agencies like Qual IT. "For a customer like the Transport Agency this does provide independence, and avoids any perception of bias from testers. Qual IT also have a big resource that gives the client flexibility, something we can't do with a fixed in-house testing team. Qual IT also bring in best practice as professional testers, and provide their team with professional development outside of our project."

A collaborative attitude has been key to the Transport Agency project's success. "It doesn't work well when a tester lives to find a bug, rather than work with the development team to achieve a great outcome for the client." Tony points out that an adversarial environment means developers are reluctant to hand over code until its perfect, slowing down the overall development process.

Linley says the emphasis on quality has paid off for the project. "Quality assurance has been a key of ensuring we delivered a quality product. This was a big change for the organisation - we didn't want

the site not operating at the optimum level from day one. So we didn't release anything we weren't comfortable with and Qual IT provided the last call on that."

The Transport Agency are currently underway with Phase 2 of the website project, which involves consolidating a number of other Transport Agency websites, and partner sites. Quality remains at the forefront of their ongoing developments as does Qual IT.

About Qual IT

Qual IT is New Zealand's largest provider of quality assurance services for information technology, working with some of the country's largest and most successful organisations, including Transpower, NZ Police, IAG and New Zealand Transport Agency through offices in Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton and Christchurch. Formed in 2004 we have in excess of 230 senior permanent and contract quality assurance and test professionals.

Integrated QA solutions

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