PGG Wrightson

Qual IT success story

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Need: Confidence that the proposed vendor solution would meet PGG business requirements.

Solution: Early introduction of Quality Assurance and Software Testing Process.

Outcome: The successful empowerment of Technical Field Representatives through Mobile Technology.

Agri leader benefits from early focus on quality
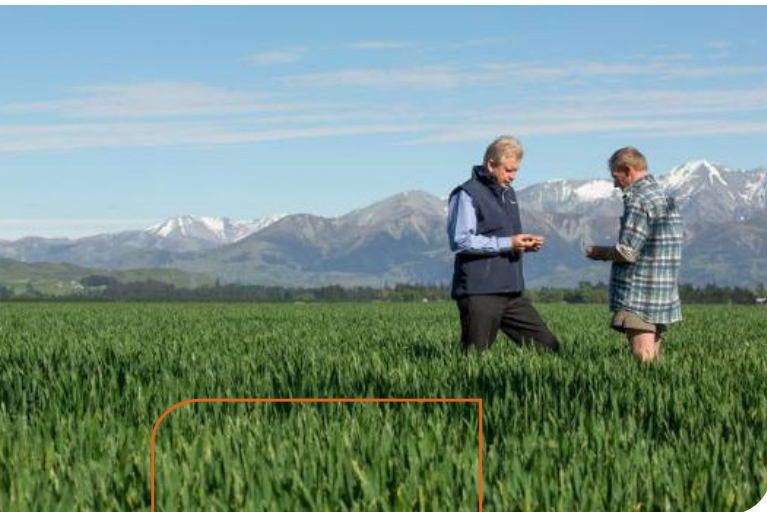
Helping the country grow

PGG Wrightson (PGW) is one of New Zealand's oldest and biggest providers to the agricultural sector, 'helping grow the country' by offering a wide range of products, services and solutions to growers, farmers and processors in New Zealand and globally. Employing over 2100 people, PGW is listed on the NZ Stock Exchange and in 2014 generated $1.2 billion in revenue.

PGW's frontline staff includes Technical Field Representatives (TFRs) who interact with and serve the company's customers in the field (sometimes literally). PGW wanted a mobile application that would empower the TFRs with the information they needed, where they needed it so they could stay at the leading edge of customer service.

"We wanted the application to allow the reps to communicate better, plan better and ensure we saw more of our customers more regularly," says John Skurr, National Sales Support Manager at PGW.

Planting seeds of progress

PGW worked with software development firm, Intergen and digital design agency NV Interactive to develop the Windows 8-based mobile application.

Certainty in IT outcomes

"We started with the user in mind and their problems and then decided what we could make to help them," says John. The PGW team envisioned a system that would resonate with TFRs of all generations, young tech-savvy ones as well as those that have been in the business for decades. A detailed and thorough functional requirements document was a good foundation to start the project on, adds John.

With NV Interactive leading the design phase and Intergen developing the software, Qual IT was brought on board at the requirements stage to provide quality assurance, even though John wasn't initially convinced of the value. "In the beginning, I didn't really appreciate the value of testing and was tending to chop it out of our budget, thinking that it was a bit superfluous."

The value of independence

Qual IT became involved in the project as the final application design was delivered and the PGW team was required to sign it off for development. "Qual IT said that they would sit down with me and test the design against the agreed functional requirements. At the time I didn't think much of it, but in hindsight, I realise that was fantastic." It was a point in the process where PGW could take stock and confirm what had so far been delivered was designed to brief.

The next phase involved Intergen bringing this design to life in the mobile application. Qual IT tested the delivered application against the initial requirements document, keeping the entire project true to its initial objectives. John says "once Intergen delivered the built solution, Qual IT came in again, and this is where their real power was. We had a pretty robust process.

There were a few things that didn't look perfect and we quickly got those ironed out. I would give Qual IT a big tick for their process. They led us, sat with us and trawled through page upon page, testing the application against our first functional requirements document."

Reaping the benefits

Through this project, there has been a shift in PGW's approach towards quality assurance for their IT investments. "At the business level, where you have little understanding of software testing, it is difficult to grasp its importance and there is an inclination towards cutting it out of the budget. I asked my

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>
> John Skurr
> National Sales Support Manager
> PGG Wrightson

in-house IT team at the beginning, 'can't we do this (testing) ourselves?' and I was advised to get independent, specialist testers. I am glad I listened."

Every time Qual IT intervened in the process, it gave confidence to the PGW team that they were on the right track. "There was a massive reduction in risk and it gave us confidence that we were sticking to the right milestones."

Qual IT were like an insurance policy to cover any potential snags in the development process and reckons it would be hard to put a dollar figure on the value of that work, says John. "It is a really good investment. And in the scheme of things, we are not even talking about a big sum of money.

I think the value of their work is a bit under-appreciated because they are really your auditors in the whole application development process and they are the ones ensuring that you're getting what you asked and are paying for".

The application today is live and has been rolled out across the company with nearly 200 TFRs across the country using it every day.

Looking back over the development lifecycle of the project, John offers his experience to other teams looking to develop software applications for business, "in the beginning I thought it would be a waste of time, but it wasn't a waste of time in any way, shape or form and I'll always have independent testing done if I lead another project like this".

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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