

Case study

BSkyB doubles testing capacity to boost product innovation



HP Performance Center transforms performance testing environment, improving throughput by 150 per cent

Industry

Communications, media and entertainment

Objective

Create a centralised testing environment, available at multiple sites allowing greater collaboration and a better way of working across the business

Approach

Formed a business plan based on enterprise options with HP, supplier of incumbent LoadRunner software

IT matters

- Standardised processes and centralised resources, enabling greater collaboration among testing team, reducing duplication and replicating best practise
- Increased testing capacity, allowing the business to more than double its testing workload while only adding 20 per cent more manpower
- Enabled testing to be scheduled out of hours, raising performance testing throughput by 150 per cent

Business matters

- Enabled rapid development of new products and services, securely and effectively, maintaining business reputation for innovation
- Centralised licence models, improving delivery times and increasing value to the business



“This is as difficult a performance testing environment as I’ve seen anywhere. You’re working on new ideas on a large scale to a fast pace, yet the tools keep pace. We have access to information we’d never previously considered. Performance testing has gone from nice-to-have to essential. We rely on HP tools to succeed.”

– Billy Hamilton, test team manager, British Sky Broadcasting



Performance testing improvements allow greater product innovation

British Sky Broadcasting is the pioneer of satellite TV in the UK. It is a now ‘triple-play’ operator across TV, telephone and broadband with 10.5m customers. It continues to forge a reputation for innovation, being the first to market with new services. It is using HP Performance Center to transform its testing capabilities, creating an environment for more accurate, faster testing – allowing faster times to market for new products.



Challenge

Introducing tablets to the workplace

British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB) is a satellite broadcaster based in the UK. It has 10.5 million customers and reported revenues of £6.5 billion for 2011.

The business has grown from a pioneer of satellite TV into a 'triple play' operator. It currently has 4m broadband and 3m SkyTalk telephone customers; it is looking to push an increasing amount of content through mobile phones, laptops and tablets. It has a reputation for leading the market in innovation, being the first to launch remote record (Sky+), driving the viewing standard to HD and content-via-mobile devices (Sky Go).

"BSkyB is at the forefront of every new innovation that has gone mainstream in this market," says Billy Hamilton, test team manager, BSKyB. This requires constant investment in research and development, with a pipeline of new technology and testing taking place. It also requires the ability to move very quickly with a robust and scalable product.

"We are a media company, not a financial institution. That means we commit to a date and build the product to meet that date," says Hamilton. "We are aggressively pushed to deliver."

Needing a multi site solution

BSkyB used HP LoadRunner software for its testing, "the shining star of the performance testing world", according to Hamilton, but the company continued to face several challenges. It lacked a centralised view of testing, running multiple testing sites was creating inefficiencies across the business and roles were replicated. Teams were unable to collaborate effectively and there was duplication of effort. Worse, software licences were kept on dongles, with staff forced to travel between locations to carry out testing. "It was farcical. We had guys flying around the country with a dongle, booking into hotels for the night. You can't do that with 20 projects a month on the go."

Solution

Greater flexibility, easier collaboration

Aware that HP Performance Center was the best multi site version of LoadRunner, Hamilton invited HP to build a business case: "We wanted to map what benefits it would create, how much bang we got for our buck."

HP Performance Center would create an enterprise-based solution, with shared testing tools accessed via the web, available 24 x 7 from any location. "The technical side worked, it was reliable with a great support service and HP was demonstrating innovation around the tools. There were no other options as strong as HP," says Hamilton.

The initial installation would be followed by adding HP Diagnostics software tools and HP TransactionVision to increase the penetration testing capability, moving from pure identification of performance issues to root cause analysis. HP SiteScope, the monitoring tool for testing and tracking response times and availability of software applications, would also be implemented.

Reliability, scalability

Hamilton's team conducted 170 projects in 2011, all using HP Performance Center. These included a new digital telephony system, voice recognition software and the high-profile launch of the Sky Go application, from the merger of Sky Player and Sky Mobile TV. Most ambitiously, the company replaced its entire revenue system with a £12m investment in a new data centre, including hardware, application stack and operating system. "This is a £6.5 billion a year operation, around £3-4m of revenue every hour, you have to be fairly sure the new system is going to work," says Hamilton. "There is no roll-back to take 10.5m customers back if things go wrong."

Using the HP TransactionVision application, Hamilton was able to identify where issues occurred and narrow them down more efficiently. Testing identified a variety of problems with the revenue system migration, including middleware, scalability issues and problems with the database layering. All were dealt with. The launch went without a hitch and to a lower cost than companies of a comparable size.

"We did this in six months," says Hamilton, "which is not a lot of time compared to other companies. A bank might have taken 18 months. We can't take that time; we need to do it, even if that means there are greater risks involved."

Benefits

Faster, more efficient testing

Since the HP deployment, the number of projects has more than doubled, but the number of testing staff has only increased by 20 per cent. This is partly because HP Performance Center allows ongoing tests and results to be shared over the web across multiple sites. Reducing the amount of time spent waiting for tests to complete enables testers to schedule tests to run over weekends, further improving throughput.

"HP Performance Center brings more flexibility to the way we now work by enabling us to use protocols across controllers. The ability to share testing artefacts between projects also increases efficiency and reduces costs," says Hamilton.

The financial benefits of implementing HP Performance Center have been impressive. A Return on Investment (ROI) analysis covering an initial two year period reveals that BSKyB achieved seven figure savings over that period. The payback period was just 5.3 months on the initial investment.

The report also shows anticipated annual six figure 'cost avoidance' savings from sharing of information and assets, better licence management, reduced travel and courier costs and general increases in speed and efficiency. It has made the dongles redundant.

It has also brought BSKyB closer to HP. Hamilton says the pair are testing new products together in practical situations with BSKyB among the first to take products fresh out of development: "It's strengthened the working relationship."

Customer solution at a glance

Software

- HP Performance Center
- HP Diagnostics
- HP TransactionVision
- HP SiteScope

From nice-to-have, to essential

The testing workload is expected to continue at the same level, including an initiative to provide BSkyB engineers with a mobile platform to process orders on home visits. He says HP Performance Center enables more tests in parallel. "It's not so much the improvements in the speed of a test – no two tests are exactly the same, so you can't compare like for like, but we're able to do so much more in any given day."

This ability to do the job better has transformed the reputation of the testing department. Performance reports are available at 5am rather than late afternoon, legacy equipment is maximised and capacity planning is more accurate.

"The team has grown in influence. We're better able to assess more technology issues relevant to the business, which means the value of the department has increased tremendously. We have more requests for our input."

The team is also better able to inform on business risk: "Performance testing has gone from nice-to-have, to essential," continues Hamilton.

"This is as difficult a performance testing environment as I've seen anywhere," concludes Hamilton. "You're working on new ideas on a large scale to a fast pace. Yet the tools keep pace. We have access to information we'd never previously considered, and we're regularly taking proven test methods into new parts of the business."

Learn more at

hp.com/go/performancecenter

Sign up for updates
hp.com/go/getupdated



Share with colleagues



Rate this document

