CASE STUDY

Increasing Efficiency and Speed with a Community of Practice

SQA Group partners with a health insurance agency to formalize QA team and eliminate siloes

OVERVIEW

Commonwealth Care Alliance (CCA), a New England not-for-profit health insurance agency, partnered with SQA Group to formalize its QA team and increase efficiency and velocity in the end-to-end test lifecycle. SQA Group introduced a Community of Practice (COP) model to eliminate siloes, identify challenges, and share best practices.

CHALLENGE

CCA was a growing organization that organically "evolved" its quality assurance – its first practitioners having been business analysts who performed testing tasks part-time. The QA team hadn't been formally trained, but rather was built based on individuals' domain knowledge. There was institutional knowledge about how to test specific applications, but the team had no upstream or downstream visibility – understandably, integration defects were common.

What's more, when it came time to automate processes, the CCA team hadn't built the foundation necessary to be able to introduce effective automation. SQA Group had worked with CCA on previous projects and based on that positive history was called to help drive efficiency and increase velocity.

IMPACT

With the help of SQA Group and the introduction of QA COPs, CCA was able to eliminate siloes between its teams, better identify challenges and problem-solve together, and increase efficiencies across the organization.

By the end of SQA Group's work with the organization, CCA decreased data construction from 3 weeks to 1 hour. In addition, time to onboard test automation teams decreased from 1 week to 1 day, resulting in savings estimated at over $600,000 a month.

1 year following this successful project completion, CCA reached out to SQA Group to extend the COP model to its data practice.

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SOLUTION

SQA Group was hired to help CCA shift toward a COP model, which is characterized by self-organizing, non-hierarchical teams that are organized around a technical domain, a business domain, or both. The goal was to start bringing people together across the organization to identify challenges, gain visibility into other teams' solutions, problem-solve together, and share best practices.

The benefits of the COP model for CCA were that it:

- Ensured that the QA practice was evolving from common guiding principles
- Identified best practices and extended them to the entire organization
- Enabled optimization of the r end-to-end test lifecycle
- Supported local variation by business / technology need while maintaining common practices and standards
- Was organically grown, connecting practitioners across department boundaries to enable self-evolution

The first challenge that the COPs tackled was "all things testing": from manual testing and test development to test automation and data. SQA Group identified test data mining as a significant bottleneck and helped the CCA team shift to data creation instead, eventually automating the process. This process that originally took 3 weeks was reduced to 1 hour.

In addition, the time to onboard test automation teams was reduced from 1 week to 1 day. With 12 test automation teams deployed at any given time, this single efficiency resulted in $60,000 of savings with each test cycle – of which there were dozens every month.

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