How Essex Council cut their testing time by more than 90%

GOVERNMENT

The Challenge

Essex Council's QA team had been using spreadsheets for defect tracking and logging testing, with Word docs and emails for writing and presenting reports. According to Steve Mcgeary - Technology Service Operations Team Leader, their biggest challenges were "showing where we provide value, as testing wasn't considered a high priority. The fact that we were using outdated practices and reports didn't help either. We were often left out of communications for projects and didn't get sight of them until later in the development phase."

When they were asked to test the HR and Payroll system replacement, they realized they would need to make sure that everything is recorded in one place in an easy format that people could easily use and understand. A place where they could store all of their testing records and somewhere they won't have to create things from scratch every single time they wanted to test something.

The Solution

After a trial period on 3 different test management tools, the team chose PractiTest. They based their decision on the usability, the details the software can create, and also the different functions. "With the other two, some bits were good, some bits weren't." Says Steve. "People liked PractiTest because it isn't overwhelming and is easy to use. all the information is very clear, and everything is linked which gives us greater traceability for auditing purposes."
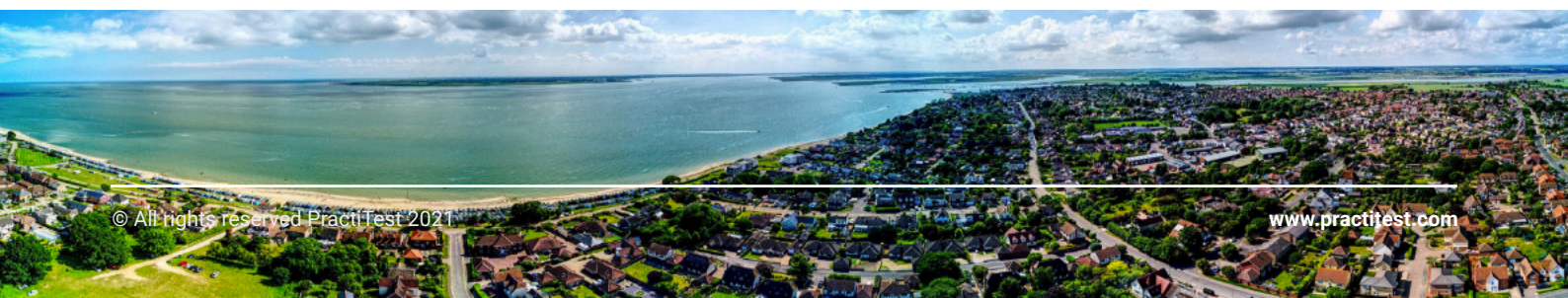
The biggest thing is the visibility this gives everyone in the project. We can clearly see the entire picture, and go as deep as we want with the details.

The PractiTest benefit

The team uses PractiTest in the main project for integration testing, data migration and UAT (User Acceptance Testing including Operational Acceptance Testing and accessibility testing), but also for Business-As-Usual testing like website updates or applications upgrades.

"Before PractiTest our testing was all over the place. Whereas with PractiTest, we have everything in one project; we have requirements linked to testing linked to test sets linked to issues. The biggest thing for me is the visibility this gives everyone in the project. I can now

just send a dashboard link to Programme Managers and they can see exactly where we're up to in testing and how many defects we've come up against. The traceability makes it a lot easier to explain why we have issues. It's opened up communication to a wider audience who normally wouldn't have that visibility. The efficiency of testing has increased and we are able to complete testing much quicker. That is a great, great help."

Without PractiTest, we wouldn't be able to complete our testing at all.

The most beneficial features
"The dashboard is extremely helpful. Previously, giving people spreadsheets and word reports, people aren't necessarily sure about what they're reading or what they're looking at. Whereas with the dashboards, they can instantly understand where things are at. We can now clearly see the entire picture. The dashboards definitely help with getting people to see the big picture, rather than getting bogged down in the details of it.
Steve continues explaining how not only the "big picture" people enjoy PractiTest. "I'm not analytic at all, but even the more analytical people love it because of how deep they can go with the details. PractiTest is great for both sides of the

spectrum; big picture people and people who needs all those details.

A game changer for the team
"Without PractiTest, we wouldn't be able to have completed our testing at all. We have our short integration testing window, 5 weeks to test 93 integrations. We obviously had to record all those issues and retest with multiple test sets. We would not have been able to do that without PractiTest, it just made it so much easier.
Moreover, thanks to the PractiTest team, the learning curve went straight up, and my team picked it up really well. We've managed to get lots of fine details, issues and get a good open communication between us and the developers quickly. We just would not have any of that without PractiTest."

A game changer for the organization
But not only the testing team sees and feels the benefits in PractiTest, according to Steve, PractiTest affect the organization and the deliverables as

well: "Going by what we used to do, it probably took 10 times longer to test the same thing the old way. It has dramatically reduced the amount of time that we need to test. And it's all because of PractiTest's usability. Everything is already there. We can just upload our requirements, create our tests, and away we go. It's dramatically cut down the amount of time that we need to do things."

Having an effect beyond the testing team is extra important when talking about a government institution. Being a nonprofit organization, the testing funding is based on tax-payers money. Steve and his team have to show where that money is going, and why they're spending it in certain areas. They need to make sure that the money is providing valuable services and fits the purpose. "Our successful experience has led other teams in the organization to want to use it as well, leveraging the reporting capabilities and Azure DevOps integration so they can work

with us a lot closer and a lot easier. PractiTest creates a lot of interest and is showing a lot of positives. I think we're gonna be using it for a very long time, when the leadership team actually takes a look at the big picture and sees what we're spending compared to how much value is actually brought in." Besides delivering 10 times faster and

> it took 10 times longer to test. PractiTest usability has dramatically reduced the amount of time that we need to test.

reducing testing time dramatically, PractiTest has also improved the team's position in the organization; "Our team definitely has been put more in the spotlight and not forgotten about since we started reporting out of PractiTest and it's great to see our team getting acknowledged."

"Having PractiTest raised the team up a level. We can now show stakeholders where we can provide value. PractiTest shows that we are taking things seriously, we're not doing things half-heartedly, we are trying to get down to the absolute fine detail while showing the big picture. It really helps us bridge the gaps between us and the development team, as all stakeholders can actually see everything in one place. PractiTest has definitely helped our team elevate ourselves."