Meredith Corp. Automates to Cut Test Time While Reducing Effort with Eggplant Functional

Profile
Meredith is the leading media and marketing company serving American women. Meredith features multiple well-known national brands, including Better Homes and Gardens, Parents, Family Circle, Fitness, More, American Baby, Every Day with Rachael Ray and Family Fun — along with local television brands in fast-growing markets.

As the industry leader in creating content in key consumer interest areas such as home, family, health and wellness and self-development, Meredith uses multiple distribution platforms to give consumers content they desire, including print, television, online, mobile, tablets and video.

Eggplant supports the media firm’s shift to agile software development
Meredith’s technology division decided to implement an automated testing solution that would help streamline updates to Woodwing, the organization’s editorial workflow management system. Woodwing is a vital tool for many of Meredith’s brands, helping ensure that content is managed effectively across the portfolio, from creation to archiving, including the publication of many digital editions including Enhanced for Tablet (EFT) versions.

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Stacie Franklin
Lead Project Manager
Meredith
Woodwing has a complex infrastructure, spread across three locations including a central server that synchronizes with local users across each location. The users access the system via both Mac and PC and can include both local, online and remote (VPN) users. Updates to the Woodwing application are typically released every six to eight weeks, and each can offer critical bug fixes and features.

“Our editorial workflow management system is a vital application for the brands that use it, so keeping it up to date is very important to us – effective testing of updates is essential but also requires a very intensive test plan,” said Stacie Franklin, Lead Project Manager, Meredith. “When we were doing manual testing, the time requirement was a huge factor — both the cost of testing and the cost of downtime to implement the update were significant, meaning that we only prioritized the time to implement three or four updates per year.”

An automated testing solution was seen as an effective way to reduce the testing time burden on the organization and the company researched many tools at a high level, before conducting a detailed comparison between Eggplant Functional and Sikuli.

“Based on its ease of use and multiplatform capabilities, we determined that Eggplant Functional was the best tool to meet our requirements for automated testing around updates to Woodwing,” said Franklin. “However, we also wanted to have the option to leverage automated testing as a tool for growth within our organization and our selection of Eggplant was also based on its ability to support Macclient testing across other key applications.”

Two of Meredith’s testing team were given test licenses for Eggplant to conduct an initial pilot and following a positive experience, implemented a full rollout of the tool and a complete set of test scripts to cover much of the upgrade process. The company received dedicated support from Eggplant’s customer support team to ensure a successful implementation.

“We have been very pleased with the level of support received from Eggplant both during the early stages of our engagement, but equally as a proactive partner on an ongoing basis,” said Franklin.

Since implementation, Eggplant Functional has delivered compelling time savings to the Woodwing upgrade process. Meredith runs the test plan at least three times including its development, test, and production environments, now spending a total of about 7.5 hours of testing time per upgrade, rather than 15 hours (plus a reduced staff requirement) when manual testing.
“From a testing time perspective, the section of our test plan that we targeted for Eggplant took 4–5 hours to test manually, but with Eggplant, it takes about 2 hours to test,” said Franklin. “But, when you combine this with the fact that we now have minimal human involvement in the testing, it means that we have gained a lot more than just a reduction in test time — our human resources have been freed up to focus on higher-value activities.”

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“Eggplant has given us the ability to complete upgrades more frequently. In addition, Eggplant Functional has also helped us to increase our confidence in upgrades by making it easy for us to run a full set of scenarios against a change request, rather than only doing a few specific tests.”

STACIE FRANKLIN, LEAD PROJECT MANAGER, MEREDITH

Going Agile

Beyond Woodwing, Meredith is also currently employing an agile development process for the creation of its video database. Video is a significant factor for any media organization these days, and management and archiving of these large files is an important consideration.

“This project involves much more application development than our Woodwing requirement, and we have adopted an agile environment, with sprints occurring every two weeks and re-prioritizing our backlog on a regular basis,” said Franklin. “We are hopeful Eggplant Functional will support our ongoing agile development efforts for the video based project and are looking forward to having our application developers involved in using it in the future to do their system testing as well.”

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