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Differential QA staffing strategy makes captive center operational

STAG's differential staffing approach enables a global leader in semi-conductors to make their India captive center rapidly operational, staffed with the right mix of test talent to support quality initiatives on product releases and drive smooth transition ownership of a product line as per the company's business plan.

▶ Domain - Wireless (Bluetooth)

▶ Technology - Bluetooth audio, Bluetooth profiles, and SDK

CUSTOMER AND PRODUCT BACKGROUND

The customer is a major technology innovator and a global leader in the semiconductor industry, with products for both wired as well as wireless communications. It has a range of Bluetooth products that enable delivery of voice, video, data, and multimedia to and throughout a home, office, or mobile environment. The company has the broadest portfolio of state-of-the-art system-on-a-chip solutions as well as software solutions for manufacturers of computing and networking equipment, digital entertainment and broadband access products, and mobile devices.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The client had a business requirement of setting up a captive center in India and making it operational, staffed with a specialist QA team to carry out various software tests – functional, automation, and regression – and enable the smooth transition of the product line from the USA in a timeframe of two months.

The client solicited with a number of manpower service providers to build a team. However, the company's requirement, of QA personnel with skills in multiple technologies and with many years of experience, was unique and therefore difficult, if not almost impossible, for manpower service providers to fulfill. It was at this critical juncture that STAG stepped into the picture and proposed a unique approach to fulfill the client's staffing requirement.

SOLUTION

STAG's staffing solution included creation of three sub-groups comprising a nine member team with mixed skill sets – mobile, Bluetooth, and embedded – and experience ranging from two to seven years spanning across the three groups. Team members not familiar with the Bluetooth domain were put through a two-week long basic level training program. This team had clarity on the customer expectations and clear definition of the quarterly goals before they were deployed at the customer's premises.

Team members had mixed skill sets and experience ranging from 2 to 7 years.

At the customer's premises, the team was given comprehensive product training by an expert to facilitate the Knowledge Transfer process. It was then exposed to the lab environment so members could experience first-hand the actual production environment. The team also went through intensive sessions where they had to explore the reference applications, viz. the earlier product versions and the current product version documentation, to familiarize them with the product architecture.

The team started to work on the actual product when it was transitioned to the India captive center. At the customer end, the team was supervised by a QA Manager whose responsibilities included monitoring the product deliverables and direction in work as per project demand.

Over time, the team started taking on wider responsibilities, improving test assets and thereby increasing the stake holder's confidence in it. Certain areas for automation were identified and five more members were added to the team to support this initiative. With the experience of multiple releases over time, the team was able to understand the dependencies and define the right scope regression. This in turn enabled them to reduce the release cycle time wherever the business situation demanded.

Typical success factors like good planning, effective tracking, timely release with good quality, team flexibility, and attitude towards business impact was seen in each subsequent release. The QA Manager got the required approval to take the core team on board the customer organization and define the temp staff requirement as well as the duration to manage the rest of the releases in the road map. Over time, some members of the QA team smoothly transitioned to the customer organization, thus forming the nucleus of the core team, and additional staffing needs were seamlessly handled by STAG.

OUTCOME AND VALUE ADDITIONS

STAG provided the client with a specialist QA team that contributed significantly towards making the captive center operational and ensured the transition of the product line from the USA to India within the stipulated timeframe. This approach largely enabled the adoption of a plug-and-play approach to QA staffing, fulfilling staffing requirements on demand seamlessly without impacting project schedules. Aggregation of the different skill-sets of the team helped in ramping up of product knowledge and designing adequate test case while ensuring complete test coverage.

STAG focused on ensuring the team's product knowledge ramp-up at all times to sustain their productivity during all product releases.

CUSTOMER SPEAK

" *STAG's solution was instrumental in building a core team to meet the initial goals set for the center to acquire product development ownership.* "

- QA Manager