

VIEWPOINT



Jim Kent

CEO, WORKSOFT

With over twenty years leading and growing software and technology companies in the U.S. and abroad, Kent oversees corporate strategy, growth and innovation at Worksoft, a leading global provider of automation software for business process validation and business process discovery. As CEO, he works with Global 5000 companies to speed up project timelines, improve quality and gain operational efficiencies.

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Whether outsourcing or insourcing QA, automation is key!

Many businesses choose to outsource IT projects and even business processes. But in doing so, CIOs risk losing direct control over key elements of quality and performance. In a recent interview, Jim Kent, CEO of automation technology provider Worksoft, Inc., argues that as the number of enterprise applications continues to grow, automation enables CIOs to retain control over quality assurance, whether the function is outsourced or insourced.

Why have many CIOs turned to outsourcing quality assurance for their enterprise applications projects?

Companies that outsource projects or ongoing maintenance to a systems integrator or consultant typically are looking to gain efficiencies and access to specific expertise. QA is part of every project and can account for 30 percent to 40 percent of project resources to ensure that the application is going to work as expected. SIs account for about 75 percent of the projects underway today for Global 5000 companies, and this is a growing trend.

How does outsourcing enterprise application QA impact a CIO's management control?

CIOs are getting more and more uncomfortable over this because the situation is dramatically different than a few years ago. Business units have an enormous say in the technology choices being made and the number of enterprise applications in use has exploded. A \$10 billion company may have 500 different enterprise applications. Quality assurance means ensuring that every business process works end-to-end, every day, across all of those applications. Today a "one-app-at-a-time" mentality no longer works. And with the typical SI relationship lasting only 36 months on average, if QA is being done manually or with scripting, all that intellectual property likely goes out the

door when the relationship ends. QA activities need to be viewed differently today; they must be viewed as creating a long-term, reusable corporate asset for the enterprise.

Does a platform for automated functional testing give the CIO greater control?

Absolutely. Without automation, an organization is either not checking every core business process or is not doing it often enough. With the pace of change today, it's impossible to keep up by doing this manually or using scripts. With an automation platform to perform testing, they can "capture" every one of their core processes and run that automation portfolio monthly, weekly, daily, or on demand. We have customers doing lights-out testing with 100 virtual machines performing 300+ hours of automation every night! That's validating hundreds of thousands of business process steps daily. With automation software, three people can do the work of 100 resources testing manually.

Are some CIOs reconsidering the decision to outsource QA?

Yes, in some cases, but whether you bring QA in-house or continue to outsource, an automation platform is critical. It offers a way for CIOs to retain control even if they outsource quality assurance. They can do this by owning the automation assets that are developed by outsourced service providers.

Global 5000 companies are introducing digital strategies and seeing digital initiatives as mission-critical, so crisp execution is vital. When websites and business processes are interrupted, customers can be impacted and that can land a company with a high profile, negative news story. Fortunately, automation makes it possible to largely eliminate the risk of technology failures when it comes to enterprise applications. There's no better way for a CIO to lock-in quality for the business processes they support. ■