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AET

Change the way you test, transform the way you work

Quality assurance is a critical component of any software development project. It can represent a significant proportion of your costs and add many hours to the development process. If your web project extends over hundreds - or even thousands - of pages, the time and cost of quality assurance can be substantial.

The quality challenge doesn't end with the time and cost involved. All good developers will rigorously test individual page elements as they are deployed, but this type of testing can often lose sight of the cumulative impact on each and every page, and on the overall customer experience. Even if each element is working correctly, how can you be sure that the entire page is greater than the sum of its parts, and that the customer experience is exactly as you intended?

Now imagine you're a multinational brand using dozens of agencies and hundreds of content contributors across multiple markets, each with strict compliance requirements. Your testing challenges aren't about the functional compliance of a page during the build phase. They're about continuously testing hundreds of ongoing updates and changes where errors can have an impact on customer experience and brand integrity, and could possibly have regulatory consequences too.

If your business operates within a strict regulatory environment, how easy is it for you to prove to the regulators that your live content has been tested for compliance, and has been throughout the site's history? How confident are you that you're protected from penalties or future litigation?

Suddenly testing has taken on a whole new dimension.

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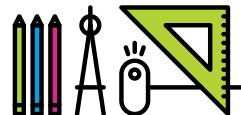
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Take a different approach

What's really needed to address these challenges is a testing method that looks beyond simple technical functionality. You need an approach that can take a high-level overview of your content and identify any potential problems with your customer experience and brand integrity, highlighting any possible regulatory pitfalls. What's more, any solution must be able to cope with today's agile delivery approaches, where testing doesn't only happen in the build phase but throughout the entire lifecycle of the project.

Oh, and it needs to be able to do this this quickly, at global scale, with a verifiable audit trail, and without adding massive cost. Now that's a tall order.

Introducing AET

Let us introduce you to Automated Exploratory Testing (AET). It's a tool developed by Cognifide that tackles the problem of delivering fast, continuous, and meaningful site testing, no matter how large your web estate is.

The concept is simple. AET takes a snapshot of any web page and compares its attributes to those of its previous state. That way AET can assess the current implementation of an entire page and identify any problems, such as the incorrect treatment of a logo, the absence of important information such as legal disclaimers or compliance statements, JavaScript and W3C validation errors, or HTTP status codes. This approach is especially useful if you are replatforming sites, or undertaking a platform upgrade, and you want to ensure that the underlying changes don't damage your online customer experience.

Testing in this way is fast. AET is able to test dozens of pages in a few minutes, a task which could otherwise take hours or even days. By managing the exceptions, AET can keep development and testing teams focused on the areas that need action. You can also scale AET horizontally and vertically and adjust the processing limits to the volume of the sites you should cover using automation.

Lightning-fast testing is not where the story ends. When AET runs, it stores the image and/or the source code of each page in a database for future reference. This creates an auditable trail of site content, showing how it has changed over time. For regulated industries this means that clients can demonstrate the compliance of their content over whatever time period they are required to store information. You can configure AET to store this information for a defined time period, or for a defined set of iterations. It can also be configured to store only images without source code, and to utilise compression to keep the database to a manageable size.

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Change the way you work

If you only used AET as a testing tool you'd see plenty of benefits. However, the real payoff comes when it's applied to help the transition to agile or continuous deployment. Because it can test so quickly, at scale, over a live environment, you can effectively use AET as a site monitoring tool, looking for any unexpected changes or issues.

AET places very little load on the live environment (effectively it appears as a browsing session), meaning you can schedule it to run regularly; weekly, daily, or even hourly if you wish. By outputting the results to a dashboard with alerts, such as the Cognifide Dashing tool, you have a means of providing continuous visual monitoring of your sites.

AET is also exceptionally easy to use. Once installed, you can train regular content authors to configure and run the tool. That means you can push out content creation and testing to a larger, distributed base of authors. You don't need to have costly developers testing and deploying content. Now you can continually deploy upgrades, confident that you can pick up anything unexpected.

And the best bit? AET is a Cognifide open-source tool, available to anyone. There are no licences to pay, there's no lock-in, and you are free to contribute to the source code to meet your own requirements if you want.

Working with Cognifide and AET

When you work with Cognifide you're getting all the advantages of AET built in to your projects. This means projects are tested quickly and thoroughly, and we're always keeping an eye on the overall impact of our work on your customer experience. So you get a much better quality outcome. It also means you aren't paying for unnecessary hours of manual testing. Instead our developers and testers can focus on activities that deliver real value.

If you're interested in adopting AET for your business we can show you how to best apply it to improve the way you work. We can also show you how you can combine AET with other Cognifide tools such as Dashing for easy dashboard reporting, or Bobcat for automated functional testing.

Contact us at info@cognifide.com