Raj Neravati, Chief Operating Officer, Cigniti Technologies, talks to KTP Radhika about the pros and cons of automation in the software testing space and the benefits of cloud-based testing

"Absence of established ROI makes automation an expensive affair"

How important is the consolidation of services and tools in testing and quality assurance?

Quality assurance is one industry that has grown rapidly over the last decade and every organization has established dedicated test teams and implemented test tools. QA services industry has higher demand compared to the supply and continues to face challenges in terms of hiring and retaining talent, inducting techno-functional experts and test architects with strong development skills. With more adoption of new age technologies like cloud, mobile, social media, big data, quality assurance has become the most important outcome of software testing. To sustain the current pace of changes, there is a demand for a comprehensive service portfolio, which can address a combination of generic and unique requirements with rapid assessments.

Most of the enterprises today, aim to consolidate services and tools to optimize their overall spend and gain efficiencies. Some forms of the consolidation include silo operations, acquisitions, expansion of global footprint etc. Services are being consolidated so that talent can be managed better and technology expertise can be utilized as shared service.

What are the benefits and pitfalls of automated software testing?

Automation in any industry is driven by three key business adjectives — faster, cheaper and better. Automation in software testing increases the test coverage and avoids human errors, in addition to the standard business drivers. Automation outcomes are enriched by identifying the right tool, creating a framework and defining scripts that are reusable and maintainable. Any mundane task like writing test cases, creating test data, navigation of screens etc. should be considered as good candidates for automation. However, in the absence of established ROI, automation can become an expensive affair and can turn counter productive. ROI doesn't need to translate into cost savings all the time; it can ensure increased test coverage, faster execution or reduction of test cycles.

> To meet the testing requirements, enterprises will have to invest in test infrastructure and resources. But the downside is that these investments will go redundant when the testing requirements are addressed. Opting for cloud based testing would not only reduce the burden of redundant investments but also carve the roadmap for testing partnerships for the coming decades.

Cloud computing is one of the greatest influencers on the IT function now. What is your take on testing-as-a-service or cloud-based testing? How is it coming up? What are the pros and cons?

Given the cost benefits, flexibility and increasing feasibility, cloud based testing will be the next logical move as the technology will benefit enterprises that optimize their processes and IT systems. Testing as a Service (TaaS) is already a part of the service offerings by independent software testing enterprises and major corporations. Independent testing services industry is still in nascent stage and there are very few players with cloud capabilities that can address the demands of the global economy.

As an undercurrent of the transformations in the IT industry, testing requirements will multiply and grow in volume, variety and velocity. To meet the testing requirements, enterprises will have to invest in test infrastructure and resources. But the downside is that these investments will go redundant when the testing requirements are addressed. Opting for cloud based testing would not only reduce the burden of redundant investments but also carve the roadmap for testing partnerships for the coming decades. Since testing over the cloud is a critical decision, there will be a demand for impeccable pre-engagement assessments and agreements in the form of a global service delivery model that adheres to standards compliance, data privacy, and global business protocols.

What are your offerings in this space? How big is the Indian market for you?

We offer a comprehensive set of services that cover the entire gamut of software testing including enterprise mobility, cloud, big data, security, compatibility, etc. The Indian market still needs to mature and outsourcing of IT in India is still driven by staff augmentation service offering. However, the trend appears to be on the upswing since the banks and stock exchanges are mandating independent quality assurance. So far, India has not been a big market place for us and most of our customers are spread out in North America and Europe.

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