

Independent 3rd Party Verification.

The utilisation of IT vendors has become common place during most medium to large scale software implementations. CIO's make the strategic decision to seek out resourcing partners because of the following:

- Shortage or lack of in-house skills and experience in a particular business sector, software application or IT speciality.
- The organisation is requiring services that fall outside of their core IT operations
- The ability to scale up or down quickly within a project lifecycle.
- Sourcing of adequate resources and performance management falls within the scope of the vendor's responsibilities.

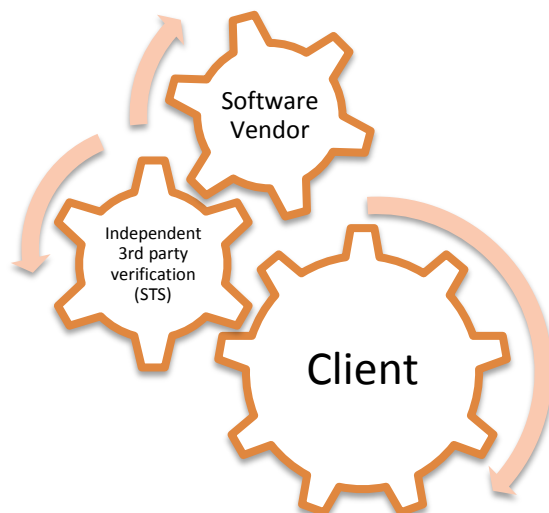
In addition to the above benefits, accountability for delivery lies with the vendor in many instances. These instances are typically in the case of software development partners who are responsible for the whole systems development lifecycle including the analysis, design, development and testing of an application. The dangers of this overlap of core focus areas can be highlighted by the following example:

An employee at a university is the tutor of a course. He has also registered for the same course in order to gain credits for his post graduate degree. He writes up his assignment and submits it with the other students. The next day he marks his own assignment himself and scores it as 100%. The dean is happy with his results and he thus qualifies for the next level course.

Moral of the story: You cannot mark your own work. Likewise, a software provider cannot Quality Assure their own system.

What is independent, third party verification?

STS offers our clients the ability to accurately determine the quality of deliverables produced by their software vendors.



How is this achieved?

Through our tried and tested Quality Assurance methods and frameworks, our clients receive an **objective** measure of quality because we are completely independent of the client and the software development partner.

STS' core business is Software Testing and Software Quality Assurance to the extent that over 90% of revenue is attributed to these professional services. It is through our core focus on software testing and software quality assurance that we are able to maintain our independence and objectivity in terms of risks and quality thereby driving excellent results – *Excellence through Independence*.

Large projects such as wide scale ERP implementations pose many risks often due to the lack of segregation of duties and subsequent objectivity i.e. a single vendor accountable for delivery, quality and risk management. STS is an independent third party with specialist services in terms of software quality assurance and software testing hence STS verifies and validates quality at each stage of the implementation lifecycle thereby mitigating risks early in the development lifecycle – *Third Party Independent Verification*.

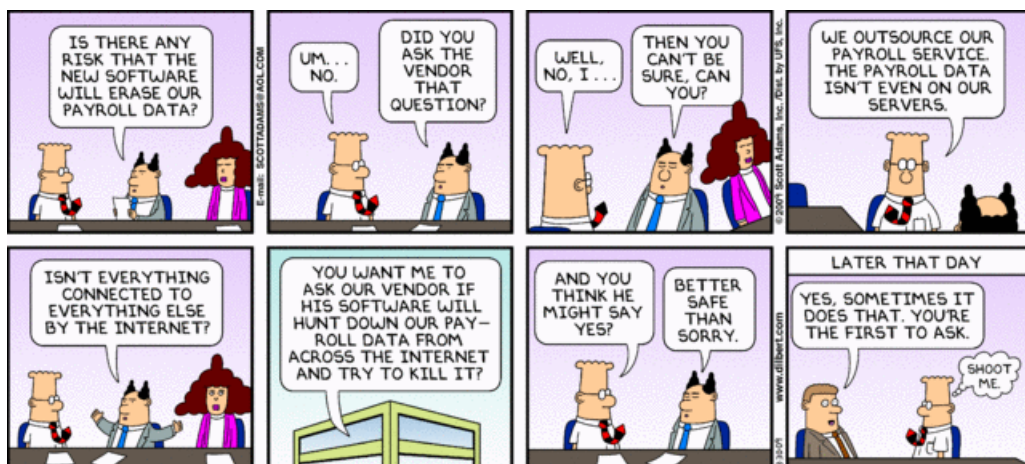


Figure 1 Independent third party verification in action. Someone needs to ask the difficult questions!

Why is it effective from an IT strategy point of view?

The successful delivery of IT projects is dependent on world class IT organisation and strategy. Strategically aligning your organisation with an independent Quality Assurance company will ensure delivery of IT projects on-time, successfully and within budget.

¹ <http://search.dilbert.com/search?w=vendor&x=0&y=0>

Timeous Project Delivery

- Decreasing the amount of development rework through repetitive defects being detected during the project.
- Minimising the late detection of defects during an implementation i.e. identifying and correcting failure points earlier during the SDLC.
- Reducing development rework through a misunderstanding of business requirements.

Successful Implementations

- Zero High and Medium production incidents post release can be achieved through effective Quality Assurance.
- Business requirements will be implemented according to the intended specification thus ensuring satisfied end users.

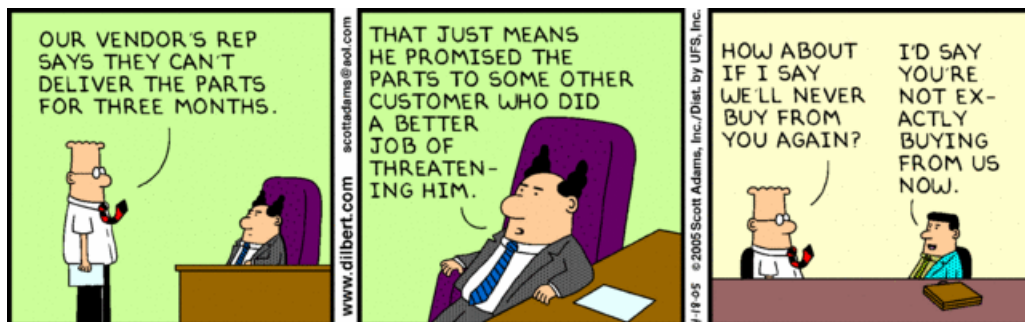
Within Budget

- Reduced time and budget spent on rework during a project.
- Projects delivered successfully the first time around.
- Business case return on investment realised.

How does a CIO gain value for money from his Vendors?

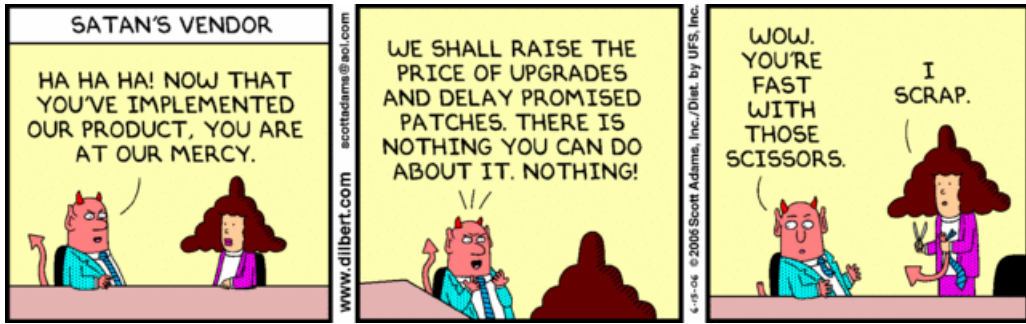
The following are common pitfalls that CIO's should be aware of and that organisations fall into when employing software vendors:

Inefficient vendor management:



Being at the mercy of your vendors:

² <http://search.dilbert.com/search?w=vendor&x=0&y=0>



Not knowing what you are getting into:



How do you hold your vendors accountable from a delivery perspective? Do you even know if they aren't delivering what they say they are? Are they charging you for patches or fixes on deliverables that should have been correct the first time around?

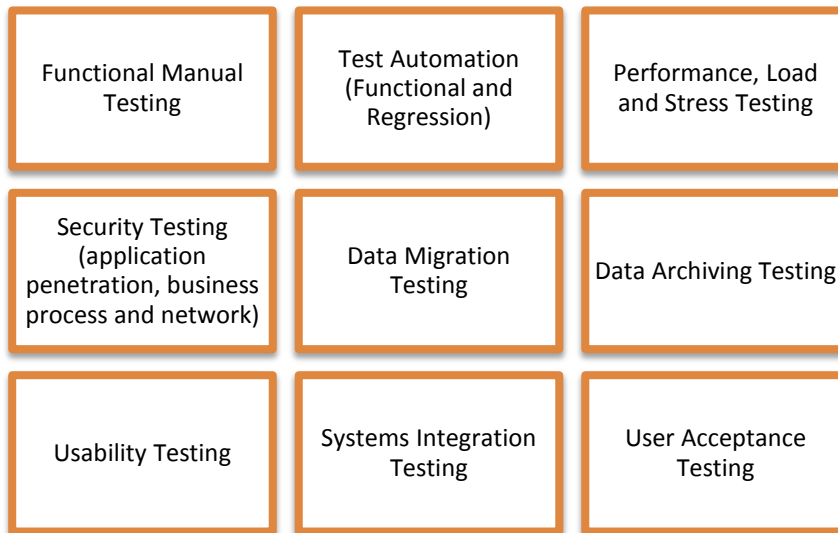
Employing an independent QA partner is the CIO's answer to the above questions. Without a watchdog, your organisation is at the mercy of the vendor. Value for money is what they tell you it is. Definitely a case of the tail wagging the dog!

STS Service Offering

STS has developed an expert capability and a world class service offering through continuous innovation, solutions development, skills development and experience gained in high profile, high budget projects within industry. This expert capability makes provision for the following software testing specialisations:

³ <http://search.dilbert.com/search?w=vendor&x=0&y=0>

⁴ <http://search.dilbert.com/search?w=vendor&x=0&y=0>



STS has also partnered with SQAMM to provide end to end software quality assurance services specifically in terms of:

- Benchmarking and elevating software quality assurance maturity levels.
- Implementing quality governance across the systems development lifecycle.
- Standardisation and integration of software testing methodologies into the systems development lifecycle.
- Centralisation of software quality assurance and testing practices to suit the needs of multiple business units and technology streams.



Independent, Third Party Verification: A Case Study

Overview

The Professional Services team within Software Testing Solutions was called in to participate in another cutting edge software implementation featuring Oracle's E-Business Suite.

Rand Merchant Bank, a forerunner in the South African investment banking arena aimed to add high levels of efficiency by implementing a reliable, scalable and highly efficient system to manage procurement and internal expenses. Being an organization that is always at the cutting edge of technology, RMB had made the decision to expand on the existing Oracle platform. For a seamless solution with strong integration capabilities the Oracle Advanced Procurement suite was the chosen instrument featuring iProcurement and iExpense.

Rand Merchant Bank is a quality driven organization and realises the need for software quality as a means to reduce implementation costs, **"getting it right the first time"** and maintaining competitive edge through the deployment of high quality technologies.

iFactory Consulting, an Oracle certified advantage partner, was scoped into the implementation from a business analysis, configuration and technical enhancement perspective. Software Testing Solutions deployed its testing experts to work closely with iFactory Consulting and ensure that quality was built into the implementation at all stages to ensure RMB with the maximum value of the Oracle product and to enhance their financial services. STS was the independent, third party validation provider for the project.

The Mission

The mission which was deemed as, the "Procure to Pay" project was focused on the integration of My Market Travel, Oracle iProcurement, Oracle iExpense, an Approvals Management Engine including integration to the existing Oracle Accounts Payable module. An associated objective was to manage all the relevant approvals through the Oracle solution and to decommission the legacy ImageNow system.

The feature set of the new platform needed to include distribution of requisitioning, approvals, receipting of goods and services, accrual accounting, matching of Payables invoices to Purchase orders and visibility of the entire process

Business Challenges

- Increased control and governance over the procurement process.
- A consistent data model which represents a true picture of performance (accuracy & control) across all the lines of business in the branch.
- Increased information control and efficiency.
- Improved decision support due to a single version of the truth, more timely information and more accurate planning and forecasting.
- A scalable operating platform.
- A reduction in reputational risk, operational losses and the finance cost base.
- Accurate and timely approvals.

- Standardised and predictable processes.
- High quality implementation to ensure immediate delivery and value to business in line with the original value proposition identified with the Oracle solution.
- A sustainable long term QA and Testing framework to support future implementations, enhancements and releases.

Testing Objectives

STS introduced Quality assurance and testing with the following objectives:

- To introduce a structured approach to testing and implementing an SQA (Software Quality Assurance) lifecycle to support the project.
- Define and Implement Testing Standards, Best Practices, Methodologies and Templates.
- Investigate and Acquire the Tools required to support the testing.
- Remove the risk of post implementation defects.

Functional and Performance testing during the implementation were focussed on:

- Functional and Regression testing during the implementation (3 cycles, defect management, environmental and configuration management).
- Performance testing ensured that the system met with the users expectations in terms of system response time.
- Efficient load testing ensured that the usage spike when going live did not negatively impact system performance.

Implemented Solution

The software quality assurance function at Rand Merchant Bank was implemented successfully in parallel to the Oracle implementation. STS functional and performance testing standards, processes and best practices were customised to suit RMB's needs. These included Testing Standards, Maintenance Process, Issue Management, Defect Management Process, Management and Reporting Dashboards, Signoff Reports, Test Plans, Test Environment Management Processes, Build Processes, Data Sheets Standards and a Data Management Process. The Oracle solution was implemented with zero production defects. Automated workflows facilitated the controlled approval of expenditure and drastically improved cost based reporting to business units. The testing proved successful in that the desired functionality was achieved with the application being stable and with high levels of performance. The project covered three Functional Test Cycles, a regression cycle and with no urgent defects. The user acceptance testing was planned around getting all the users from the relevant business units to perform their daily tasks on the iProcurement environment. This was to ensure that the users where completely satisfied with the functionality and where comfortable with signing off UAT. The performance of the system was deemed acceptable from a user perspective with individual high priority business processes also being performance tested. Response times also were well within expectation for all scenarios. In many cases, response times were below 2 seconds and for some transactions, the response times were between 2 and 4 seconds.

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