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World Quality Report

Southern Europe

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Summary

- Companies are ready to spend more on digital technologies for testing, but, it is difficult to segregate the testing budgets.

- Security is an important aspect of IT strategy for companies. Forty-nine percent of respondents confirm this fact.

- Companies are also investing in automation tools. Forty-one percent of respondents say that they have purchased automation tools to generate test data.

The important story shaping the QA and testing space in Southern Europe is agile and cybersecurity, with a new interest in AI. Companies are driving strong agile and DevOps practices in a bid to reduce the time to market and make testing better. Companies are also investing in cybersecurity to protect their brands from hacking and other threats and GDPR enforcement introduces many new information security requirements.

Southern European companies are increasingly embracing digital testing technologies. They are investing more in test automation and virtualized test environments.

Companies are interested in applying artificial intelligence (AI) and cognitive QA to reduce the time and cost of their testing, but most projects are still in the planning phase.

Difficult to slice the budget

The allocation towards testing in budgets is showing a healthy trend. It is mostly the investment in technologies for testing that is nudging test budgets up. However, it is difficult to segregate the amount spent on testing because the investment

in testing technologies is mostly clubbed with investments in collaboration tools. The survey among Southern European enterprises also reveals that it is getting more difficult to determine testing budgets separately since QA and testing teams now work as part of a bigger agile team. We also see willingness to invest in smarter AI and automation tools.

Companies harness the benefits of Agile

A shift towards agile technologies is evident in Southern European countries. Faster time to market and better testing qualities are the major drivers of agile. A need to roll out quick customer applications also works in favor of creating more agile teams.

The progress in agile is leading to adjustments from traditional teams shaping in the region. Fifty percent of South European respondents say that test activities are performed by all team members and supported by a test professional. However, 40% say that tests are mostly performed by test professionals. Certainly, there is more scope of bringing teams together in a more DevOps-like environment.

Choosing the right automation tools and adopting DevOps can help companies drive agile practices better. Currently, the adoption of DevOps practices in the region is lower than the global average. Further, as part of DevOps practices, 33% of respondents say that they also employ continuous monitoring of apps in production. This is especially important for testing customer applications on the web and mobile. Test automation is at the center of successful agile. However, 65% VPs of Applications and QA and testing managers feel that an inability to apply automation at appropriate levels is a challenge in applying agile.

Strong emphasis on cybersecurity

Security is an important objective for countries in the Southern Europe. Forty-nine percent of respondents voted enhancing security as the most important aspect of their IT strategy. This number highlights the importance of penetration testing and application landscape testing for companies in parallel with data privacy security controls.

A rapid increase in Internet of Things (IoT) devices and connected products has made the job of testing teams even more complicated. Testers have to check all the vulnerabilities of a connected device that can be exploited by hackers.

Testing for and with AI

Southern European countries, especially Italy and Spain, are ready to move to AI tools for testing. There is also another aspect when it comes to AI testing. This is to ensure that they have the necessary capabilities to help their customers move to new AI processes.

In fact, 54% respondents say that they are experimenting with a new testing approach for testing intelligent automation (including ML and AI elements). As far as employing AI for testing is concerned, 71% of respondents say that they want to employ AI to present the increasing volume of test related data in smart QA dashboard. The dashboard is basically a snapshot of data related to planned test cases, defect reports, environment ability, etc. This number is also significantly higher than the global average of 60%.

There is also interest in machine learning (ML) in the region. Companies are turning to ML and analytics to make their systems more intelligent. This will create opportunities for testing ML algorithms. But, these algorithms present new challenges for testing.

Testers should make the system learn continuously and test the hypothesis in each case. This requires a new testing mindset.

Robotic process automation (RPA) is also a growing trend in the region. Fifty-three percent of CIOs and testing managers consider robotics automation as a major automation technique in the coming year.

RPA is helping companies automate redundant jobs, such as data entry. It is also possible to integrate AI tools with RPA to gain more cognitive capabilities, such as human voice assistance. There is also excitement around the use of chat bots. Thirty-two percent of companies are using bots for data generation and 34% use bots to integrate automated test types as part of DevOps.

Automation helping to drive agility

Companies need the right automation tools to integrate testing with agile teams and even to capture the right test data. Forty-one percent of respondents say that they have purchased automation tools to generate new test data.

Companies are also facing a few challenges in reaping the benefits of automation. Eighty percent of QA and testing managers say that frequent change in the applications with every release is one of the biggest challenges in automation. This is considerably higher than the global average of 61%.

The lack of skilled and experienced test automation resources also ranks high, at 55%. This brings us to the important question of skill set required in the changing landscape of QA and testing. Automation, AI, and ML have forced companies to look for multi-skilled testers. Testers who can code and also work with behavioral aspects of digital technologies will be in greater demand.

Southern Europe seems to be behind the global average when it comes to adaption of testing skills as only 17% respondents say that they require testers with software development engineer in test (SDET) skill sets, compared to the global average of 22%.

Overall, Southern Europe has a positive outlook for testing and QA. The region is ready to embrace modern testing technologies, such as AI. But, the enterprises in the region also like to tread with some caution as is evident from the growing awareness and attention for cybersecurity. Testing teams are more agile in their approach and agile methodologies are also influencing automation tools and skills.

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