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SELF-SERVICE INTEGRATION: A QUESTION OF QUALITY

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THE DISCIPLINE OF SELF-SERVICE INTEGRATION: A RECIPE FOR OPERATIONAL SUCCESS Zied Chtioui

SQmag Interview with Stephan Goericke

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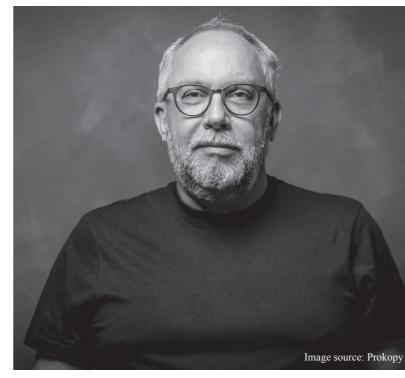


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Stephan Goericke Managing Director A4Q

Dear readers,

Welcome to our latest issue, where we highlight the transformative impact of ERP solutions and self-service platforms. Not only are they driving significant changes in the tech landscape, but they are also reshaping how businesses leverage technology to deliver efficiency, innovation, and business value.

This edition highlights the pivotal role of ERP and self-service solutions in supporting core business operations, underscoring their importance in software quality. Whether it's navigating integration hurdles or crafting user-centered experiences, we aim to provide you with valuable insights and real-world examples, unveiling the benefits and important considerations to bear in mind when implementing these technologies.

Additionally, we celebrate the 20th anniversary of iSQI with an exclusive interview feature, exploring two decades of excellence and innovation.

Whether you are working with ERP systems currently or thinking ahead to the future, enjoy reading this edition's articles from our guest authors!



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ACCEPTANCE TESTING FOR SAP IN THE AGE OF SELF-SERVICE ERP SOLUTIONS

Many organizations today use ERP systems to support their customers, vendors, and employees in doing their tasks, such as ordering goods, filing their expenses or changing their personal details in the system. Because these self-service systems (such as parts of SAP-solutions) support the core business without any manual interference of back-office employees, the business process must fulfil high quality standards. The people involved in acceptance of these systems (including acceptance testing) often are not professional IT personnel, but key-users, maintenance people or operations engineers. Because of these reasons, acceptance testing requires a specific approach which we describe in this article.

SELF-SERVICE SOLUTIONS REQUIRE MORE EFFORT FOR ACCEPTANCE TESTING.

Two trends in IT today support the implementation of large solutions based on ERP systems. One is the limited availability of IT people, so that home-grown solutions are no longer an option. The other is the limited availability of back-office people, so that there is a need for self-service solutions.

Self-service platforms are a growing trend, allowing users more control over their own activities to create, manage or execute specific tasks. It doesn't require intermediaries to interact with the required service as it is performed using self-explaining processes or via dashboards.

Well-known ERP-vendors such as SAP facilitate rapid implementation of these large solutions. However, there is one new risk: if the system fails, there are no people in the loop to prevent a failure to cause trouble for the user. So, there is less tolerance for failures. Which means that more effort must be put in making sure the system meets the required quality level, involving well-organized and wellperformed acceptance testing.

Quality

Risks

CONFIDENCE AS THE NORTH STAR

The main goal of testing is gathering information about the quality of an IT solution and the related risks, to establish the confidence the stakeholders have that they will get their pursued business value. So, confidence is the ultimate goal of acceptance testing.

Confidence is built using information about the quality level of the IT solution. Step one in acceptance testing is to perform a quality risk analysis to establish what the quality level should be. Risk classes are used while organizing the tests to mitigate the identified risks, and thus determine the quality level.

The time available for testing is limited, not everything can be tested with equal thoroughness and intensity. The number of possible tests in a self-service system is simply too large. Teams should focus their testing efforts on the high-risk areas first, which are usually the new additions, configurations, integrations, and changes.

Confidence in value

QUALITY IS A NECESSITY, NOT A LUXURY, RISK IS AN IMPORTANT STARTING POINT

To efficiently evaluate the quality of self-service solutions like SAP, it is important to know what to test and where the focus of testing should be. An SAP Quality Risk Analysis (SQRA) is a standardized risk-based approach to determine the focus for testing. The first step of the SQRA is to determine the scope of the platform. Do we need to test the complete scope?

For a well-founded Quality Risk Analysis, two main points of view are relevant: the view of the Business and the view of IT.

- The Business input consists of the "Frequency of Use" and the "Business Impact".
- The IT input consists of the "Process Complexity" and the "Technical impact".

The formula used in the SQRA is shown in the picture below:



All attributes ("Frequency of Use", "Business Impact", "Process Complexity" and "Technical impact") are rated with a number between 0 and 5, resulting in an SAP quality risk score between 0 and 100.

Business & IT stakeholders will rate and classify each process in scope during a workshop. The outcome of the SQRA is input for the Test Strategy and Test Plan. Risk class Critical (A) and High (B) classified business processes need extensive and broad testing. Medium (C) and Low (D) classified business processes can be covered by a smaller number of tests.

The outcome of the SQRA can also be used throughout the whole development life cycle. Starting with deciding the order for delivering various parts of the solution, going to when to specify tests and when to execute tests, and the risk class is even used to decide which anomaly to solve first.

TEST DESIGN WITH BOTH COVERAGE-BASED AND EXPERIENCE-BASED APPROACHES

The key-users, maintenance people and operations engineers that are involved in acceptance testing often don't start of as trained test professionals. So, they need to acquire some relevant skills. One major and important skill set is test design.

In the TMAP body of knowledge for quality engineering

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& testing we distinguish two general approaches of test design: coverage-based testing using structured test design techniques and experience-based testing using the exploratory testing approach.

You may wonder: "Why would knowing multiple test design techniques be useful?". There are two main reasons: different test design techniques are suited to different areas of interest, and a high-risk area requires another approach than a low-risk area.

We have developed a certification training course for the audience of SAP acceptance tests, that includes four test design techniques and exploratory testing (and various other relevant subjects).

EXAMPLES OF RISK-BASED SELECTION OF TEST DESIGN TECHNIQUES AND APPROACHES.

A well-known technique for test design is path testing, which determines test cases based on the flow of a business process. Path testing has several test depth levels. With a high risk class goes a high test depth level. When there is a moderate risk, a lower test depth level is selected. In a low risk situation, the exploratory testing approach can be selected. Exploratory testing means that test cases are not designed up-front, but during the test execution, based on the test ideas from the charter.

CONCLUSION

When the organization does not have a dedicated test team, businesspeople (e.g. key users) and operations & maintenance personnel will be involved to prepare and perform the acceptance tests. Usually, these people are not professional testers. To ensure that they have enough confidence whether the self-service solution meets the user's needs, the people involved need relevant skills which they can acquire with focused and proper training. For this reason, the TMAP certification scheme contains the training course "TMAP: Quality engineering for SAP". This new module is specifically designed for professionals with a crucial role in testing, accepting and implementing SAP systems. It is a solid pathway to expertise in quality engineering for SAP projects, and it's backed by the practical expertise of a great number of professionals.

More information about the TMAP training courses: https://tmap.net/page/tmap-training.

More information about TMAP certification: https://tmapcert.com/. A risk-based approach to testing by the people involved in accepting your selfservice solutions is the essential way to work towards delivering business value to your users, vendors and customers!



Pepijn Paap Test Manager ERP/SAP

Pepijn Paap is a Test Manager and Subject Matter Expert for ERP/SAP Quality Engineering. He is experienced in coaching, advising, training, planning, managing, leading and coordinating large and complex global SAP/ERP test projects (implementation, upgrades, migrations, test automation) which brought him all around the globe, participating in business transformations for a wide range of appealing companies. He is the co-founder of the "TMAP: Quality Engineering for SAP" certification.

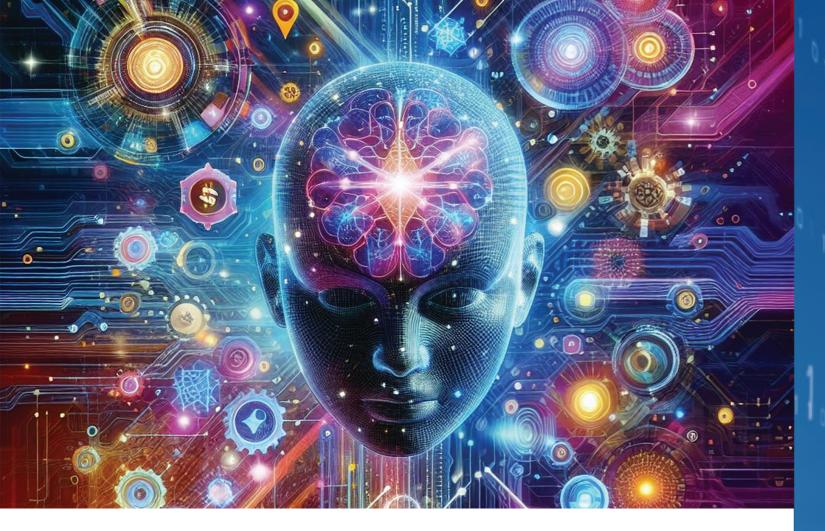
Rik Marselis

Principal Quality Consultant Sogeti



Rik Marselis is principal quality consultant at Sogeti in the Netherlands. He is a highly regarded presenter, trainer, author, consultant and coach who supported many organizations and people in improving their quality engineering & testing practice by providing useful tools & checklists, practical support and having in-depth discussions. Rik is co-author of the latest TMAP book "Quality for DevOps teams" and he is the chairman of the TMAP Special Interest Group.





User AI: Exploring its Use Cases and the Testing Landscape's Evolution

In today's fast-paced digital landscape, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become ubiquitous, revolutionizing industries and transforming the way we interact with technology. From predictive analytics to personalized recommendations, AI has opened doors to innovative solutions that were once relegated to science fiction. But as AI continues to permeate various facets of our lives, it's essential to understand its practical applications and the evolving testing landscape that accompanies it.

EXPLORING AI'S USE CASES: #AI #UseCases

The use cases for AI are as diverse as they are profound. In healthcare, AI-powered diagnostic tools are enhancing early detection rates and improving patient outcomes. In finance, AI-driven algorithms are revolutionizing investment strategies, providing unparalleled insights into market trends. And in retail, AI-driven chatbots are enhancing customer service experiences, driving sales, and fostering brand loyalty.

THE EVOLUTION OF TESTING: #Testing #Evolution

As AI technologies advance, so too must our testing methodologies. Traditional testing approaches struggle to keep pace with the complexities introduced by AI-driven systems. Data-driven testing, continuous integration, and AI-based test automation have emerged as indispensable tools in ensuring the reliability and robustness of AI applications. However, these approaches come with their own set of challenges, including data privacy concerns, algorithmic biases, and the need for specialized expertise.

BALANCING INNOVATION WITH RESPONSIBILITY: #Innovation #Responsibility

While the potential benefits of AI are undeniable, it's crucial to balance innovation with responsibility. Ethical considerations, transparency, and accountability must guide the development and deployment of AI technologies. Organizations must be cognizant of the impact their AI initiatives may have on society, ensuring that they prioritize fairness, inclusivity, and diversity in their algorithms and decision-making processes.

As Al technologies advance, so too must our testing methodologies.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION: #Collaboration #AI

In navigating the complex landscape of AI, collaboration is key. Technical and non-technical stakeholders must come together to develop comprehensive AI strategies that align with business objectives while addressing societal concerns. By fostering cross-functional communication and collaboration, organizations can harness the collective expertise and diverse perspectives needed to drive meaningful innovation responsibly.

In conclusion, the exploration of AI's use cases and the evolution of the testing landscape present both opportunities and challenges. By embracing innovation responsibly, considering the broader impact of AI initiatives, and fostering collaboration, organizations can unlock the full potential of AI while mitigating risks and ensuring ethical AI deployment. As we continue to harness the power of AI to drive progress and innovation, let us do so with optimism, empathy, and a commitment to creating a better future for all.





Sanjay K Mohindroo Group CIO US SC

Sanjay K Mohindroo, Group Chief Information Officer for US SC, boasts over three decades of expertise in technology and cyber defense, including Fortune 100 CIO roles. Renowned for aligning security strategies with business goals, he excels in leveraging cuttingedge technologies to safeguard IT infrastructures. With a knack for simplifying complexities, Sanjay responds to security breaches while fostering talent and driving transformative change through agile leadership.

SQmag Interview with Stephan Goericke

20 Years of Excellence: iSQI's Journey in Software Quality

In this exclusive interview, SQmag had the privilege to chat with Stephan Goericke, the CEO of iSQI, to gain valuable insights into the journey of iSQI and its significant milestones as they celebrate their 20th anniversary this year.

WHAT HAVE BEEN ISQI'S BIGGEST MILESTONES OVER THE 20 YEARS?

It's been 20 years already, quite a journey with many significant events shaping our economy and domain. Over the past two decades, our entire working landscape has transformed. Reflecting on iSQI's progression, I recall several key milestones. The first was our focus on developing high-quality products and stabilizing the business. The second was our aim to enhance the quality of our processes and products, while also sourcing skilled and educated personnel.

The Third phase saw our internationalization efforts. We established subsidiaries in Amsterdam, London, and Boston, expanding our reach globally. This expansion enabled us to offer examinations in seven to several different languages and recruit talented individuals from various regions, enriching our organization with diverse perspectives. Lastly, we achieved financial and economic success, cementing our position as a prominent and successful entity in our field.

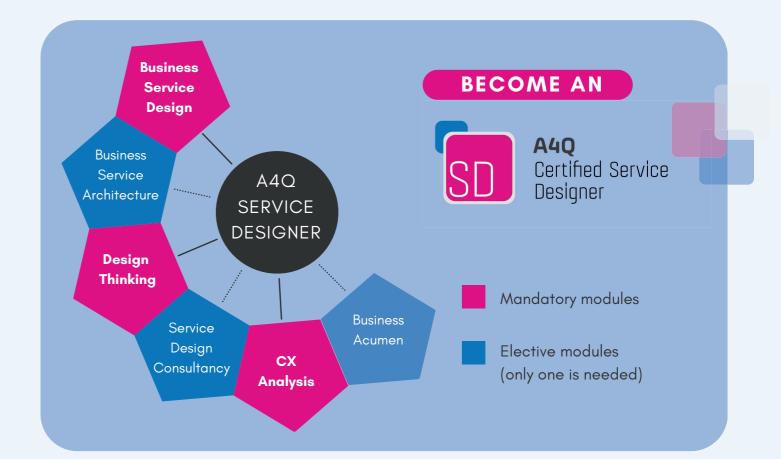
WHAT MAKES YOU VERY PROUD OF ISQI?

Certainly, I take immense pride in iSQI's overall success story. It's challenging to single out specific projects, but our endeavors in Palestine, Cuba, and Rwanda stand out. Through targeted initiatives, we've empowered young, gifted individuals, facilitating their integration into the global market and connecting them with a network of software quality engineers. Additionally, beyond our professional domain, iSQI has always prioritized social responsibility. Whether supporting local sports, and culture or contributing to global initiatives like Plant a Tree in Africa, our commitment to making a positive impact extends beyond business endeavors.

WHAT MAKES ISQI SPECIAL?

After two decades, I can confidently assert that iSQI's uniqueness lies in its dynamic and diverse workforce. Every day presents new challenges and opportunities, and the ever-changing landscape ensures no two days are alike. Working alongside a team comprising individuals from various nations and cultural backgrounds enriches our collective experience, making us a formidable and unique entity in our domain. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion serves as a cornerstone of our success.

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WHERE DO YOU SEE ISQI IN THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS?

Independent from myself, I envision iSQI continuing to thrive in the market over the next 5-10 years. Maintaining our collaborative spirit, understanding our customers' needs, and preserving our diversity will be crucial. By fostering strong networks, staying attuned to market demands, and embracing lifelong learning, we can ensure sustained success and relevance in the years to come.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A YOUNG PERSON ASPIRING TO ENTER THE SOFTWARE QUALITY FIELD?

For those embarking on a career in our field, I emphasize the importance of lifelong learning. A university degree is merely a starting point; a commitment to continuously updating skills and knowledge to stay abreast of industry trends and market demands is required. Additionally, cultivating a robust professional network is essential in today's interconnected world. By actively engaging with global communities, sharing knowledge, and demonstrating expertise, one can pave the way for personal and professional success.



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A4Q Certified Service Designer



The Discipline of Self - Service Integration:

A Recipe for Operational Excellence

In an age of rapid digital advancement, self-service solutions play a crucial role in improving operational efficiency and putting customers at the center of attention. These innovative technologies empower users to access information, complete tasks, and find solutions independently, which not only reduces the workload on support teams but also enhances overall satisfaction.

However, the true power of self-service solutions lies in their seamless integration with an organization's wider IT infrastructure. By mastering the discipline of integration, businesses can unlock a wealth of benefits, including better visibility into data, streamlined workflows, and more personalized user experiences. The process of effective integration begins by connecting self-service solutions to the various data sources and systems that form the backbone of an organization's Operations. Let's imagine ourselves as skilled chefs, carefully selecting ingredients to create a culinary masterpiece. Instead of ingredients, we are choosing APIs (Application Programming Interfaces), data sources, and microservices – the building blocks of software solutions. The key lies in seamlessly integrating these components. Unlike amateurs who hastily choose the first shiny option, we take the time to evaluate each one, examining API documentation, security protocols, data privacy compliance, and ease of integration.

To guide our selection process, we rely on industry best practices, proof of concepts, and benchmarking tools, always keeping the value we deliver in mind. Additionally, we must have a deep understanding of industry regulations like GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and other ones to ensure that our integration strategies not only work flawlessly but also adhere to the strictest data privacy and security protocols. Furthermore, we must consider the bigger picture and recognize the importance of environmental responsibility and energy efficiency in shaping the software solutions of the future.

By integrating self-service tools with these core systems, organizations can automate a wide range of workflows and processes, reducing the need for manual intervention and improving efficiency. For example, a customer could initiate a return request through a self-service portal, triggering an automated process that updates inventory records, generates a shipping label, and provides the user with status updates. Integration also enables more personalized and relevant self-service experiences. By combining user data from different sources, organizations can customize the content, recommendations, and support options to meet the specific needs and preferences of each user, resulting in increased engagement, higher satisfaction, and stronger customer loyalty.

To illustrate this concept, let's look at how various industries are using self-service integration to drive innovation. In the retail sector, leading companies merge customer data from loyalty programs, social media platforms, and purchase histories to create personalized shopping experiences and targeted marketing campaigns. Similarly, financial institutions use self-service integration to connect internal systems with advanced AI-driven fraud detection services, enhancing security measures and simplifying customer onboarding processes. Additionally, in healthcare, self-service integration links different medical devices and electronic health records, enabling real-time patient monitoring and improved care coordination. These are just a few examples of how self-service integration is fueling innovation.

"HOWEVER, MASTERING THE ART OF INTEGRATION REQUIRES CAREFUL PLANNING AND EXECUTION, AS WE **SAY "WITH GREAT POWER COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY**".

Key best practices include establishing a clear governance framework to oversee data, security, and compliance, investing in robust integration platforms and tools to streamline the process, fostering collaboration between IT, customer experience, and business teams, and continuously monitoring and optimizing integration performance and user experiences.

At the same time, organizations may face challenges when integrating self-service solutions, such as outdated systems and isolated data that hinder seamless data sharing, concerns about data privacy and security when connecting multiple systems, resistance to change from users accustomed to traditional support channels, and a lack of internal expertise or resources to manage complex integration projects. To overcome these challenges, organizations should prioritize change management, invest in training and upskilling and seek the guidance of integration specialists or managed services providers.

Mastering the discipline of integration is essential for organizations that want to fully leverage the power of selfservice solutions. By connecting these tools to their wider IT infrastructure, businesses can achieve operational efficiencies, enhance customer experiences, and ultimately gain a competitive edge in today's digital marketplace. However, this integration journey requires a thoughtful and strategic approach that balances technological innovation and business value with environmental responsibility.



Senior Specialist - Software Architecture Engineer iSAQB® CPSA-F

Zied is a visionary software architect and gifted problem-solver with a passion for critical and abstract thinking. He is also an accredited Trainer by the prestigious iSAQB for the CPSA-F program, the Certified Professional for Software Architecture – Foundation Level training. Zied excels in delivering engaging masterclasses, talks, and articles that approach topics elegantly and break down complex concepts to promote deep understanding.

His transformative communication style empowers aspiring software professionals with a forward-thinking mindset. He designs innovative, user-centric, and concise software architectures that place value at the core of every solution.

As a collaborative and inspiring leader, he fosters an environment where individuals and teams reach their full potential. Driven by continuous learning, Zied remains at the forefront, shaping the future of software architecture and leaving a lasting impact.

Self-Service Integration – A Question of Quality

THERE HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION AROUND THE SHEER VOLUME OF DATA WE, AS HUMANS, ARE CREATING. WE'VE NEVER HAD ACCESS TO SUCH A VAST AMOUNT BEFORE - YET, THAT DATA ALONE DOESN'T EQUATE TO INFORMATION.

For data to be meaningful, we should be capable of utilizing, accessing, and engaging with it – allowing it to narrate stories and inform decisions.

However, grappling with such large volumes and the decentralized nature of modern systems presents some serious handling challenges. Compounding this issue is the relentless pace of change. In today's world, everything moves swiftly—we demand rapid rollout of new platforms and capabilities.

Invariably, when encountering a problem, organizations are often eager to favour quick solutions. While these solutions may appear enticing, it's crucial to examine them from every angle and resist the allure of 'quick fixes'. How do we effectively navigate this complex space to forge the connections we require?

My experience with so-called "easy to use" tools goes back to the capture/replay test automation solutions of the 90s and it would seem that self-service offerings are making similar promises around expediting the integration of elements of an organization to realize business value more rapidly.

The idea behind this approach is to delegate the task to end-users or organizations, enabling them to establish necessary connections to facilitate value creation. This rationale is understandable. However, for this concept to truly thrive, we must consider aspects around the integration process that may not be emphasized by low-code/no-code, self-service integration, or Integration Platform as a Service (IPaaS) vendors.

COMPLEXITY

It is important to recognize that integrations have always presented challenges (highlighted by the development of specific testing techniques and approaches for both component and system level integrations). Therefore, it's worth questioning whether adding another layer/tool would genuinely simplify the process or reduce the risks involved.

Contemporary integration solutions now boast AI-driven data transformation capabilities, streamlining the conversion of data between source and target components. Though in its infancy these show promise in abstracting at least some of the complexities in these integrations.

DATA QUALITY

Contemporary integration solutions now boast AIdriven data transformation capabilities, streamlining the conversion of data between source and target components. Though in its infancy these show promise in abstracting at least some of the complexities inherent in these integrations. That said, data is notoriously dirty so what protection mechanisms are you going to employ to ensure that you don't have issues with the quality of the data feeds that you are connecting to or sourcing from? What approaches are you going to use to mitigate the risk of issues caused by inaccurate, missing, or out-of-date (stale) data?

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The concept behind self-service tools is to enable business users to create integrations directly, without needing to code. This, theoretically, allows technical teams to focus on more specialized tasks, such as higher-level strategic initiatives and product development/release. To realize this benefit, thorough consideration must be given to the customer experience, and fast feedback loops must be established when customers encounter difficulties.





SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE

When considering security and governance, we must strike a balance between agility and discipline. We need to be flexible enough to facilitate connectivity and data flow yet disciplined enough to safeguard the integrity of our

data and connections.

ISO 25010 offers a valuable checklist for addressing these concerns:

- **Confidentiality:** How do we ensure that only authorized individuals access the available data?

- **Integrity:** How do we prevent unauthorized access to our system and/or data?

- **Non-repudiation:** How robust is our audit trail for tracking events?

- Accountability: How comprehensive is our audit trail for monitoring user activity?

- **Authenticity:** How effectively can we verify the identity of users and resources?

Though speed is crucial, it should never come at the cost of compromising the security of the enterprise in pursuit of this seamless connectivity. As Quality Engineers, we must continue to pose probing questions to ensure that the seamless integration flow we aspire to delivers the anticipated benefits.

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Sue Atkins UK Training Manager for Planit

Sue Atkins is the UK Training Manager for Planit, a Testing and Quality Engineering consultancy with offices worldwide. She has been working within the field of testing for over thirty years and was one of the first test automation and performance testing consultants in the UK. Sue is an experienced Test Practitioner with a special focus on Test Process Improvement. She is also a highly regarded trainer, conference speaker and co-chair of the Scottish Testing Group.

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Industry News

The iSQI team was delighted to have participated in the ISTQB® General Assembly, joining esteemed colleagues and partners from across the globe.

This assembly serves as an invaluable platform for networking, knowledge exchange, and collaboration within the international testing community.

As an advocate for quality assurance and innovation, iSQI takes great pride in its role within this dynamic ecosystem, contributing to its growth and advancement.

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