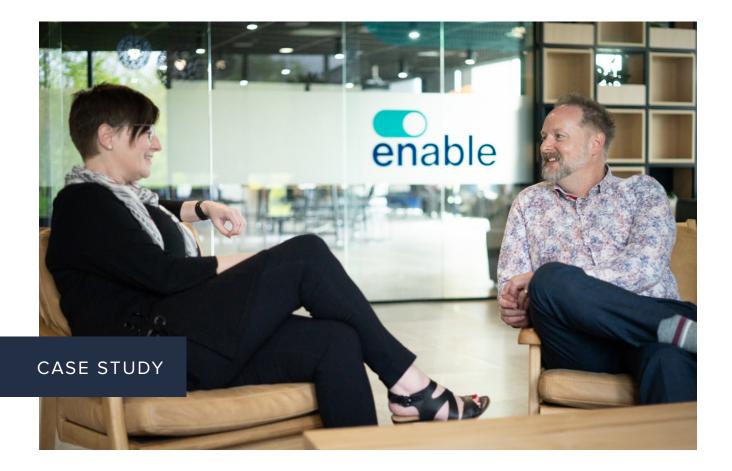# How Assurity took the headaches out of Enable's ERP upgrade testing.

CASE STUDY

Christchurch-headquartered local fibre company Enable has engaged Assurity Consulting to deliver a suite of automated testing services, dramatically reducing upgrade overheads for its Enterprise Resource Planning software while contributing to improved software quality and saving considerable time.

Enable is the fibre broadband network provider for greater Christchurch and has brought ultra-fast fibre broadband to over 200,000 homes, businesses and schools in Christchurch and towns in the Waimakariri and Selwyn districts as part of the national ultra-fast broadband initiative. Focused only on this region, Enable is wholly owned by Christchurch City Holdings Limited, the commercial arm of the Christchurch City Council.

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Situation

Finding itself on a version of Microsoft Dynamics Business Central so aged it was still called NAV, Enable opted for a migration to the renamed and reimagined version in 2021. After the migration, Enable resolved to keep its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software up-to-date, notes Richard Swift, Enable Finance Systems Manager. "While it wasn't as crucial in years gone by, these days it is important to install the latest upgrades and patches as soon as they are available, mainly from a cybersecurity and risk management standpoint," he notes.

The cadence of updates has accelerated and become more regular, too. While 'patch Tuesday' is familiar to desktop system users, on enterprise systems, major updates were once annual or even had longer spans between them. Today, ERP systems generally receive major updates on a quarterly basis. "After bedding the system down through last year and into 2022, we looked at the system status and realised we were already two versions behind," says Richard.

Going through a programme of works to bring its Dynamics Business Central to the latest version came with a stark realisation: "A lot of testing is necessary. And every quarter, we could see the testing would take up two weeks of finance team time."

He confirms that this demand on the team interferes with Business As Usual. "It's a big and costly overhead."

Solution

The notion of test automation came to Richard and his team in a roundabout manner. "An engineer on web client testing pointed out the availability of tools for this aspect of our technology stack, so we had the idea that the repeatable tasks involved in our ERP testing might benefit from something similar," he explains. "We went to Assurity, and they immediately knew what we were talking about and where we wanted to go. In fact, they said, 'we've done this before with other customers'. And that was great to hear."

Not only had Assurity done it with other customers, but its Assurity Cloud Platform is designed precisely for the purpose Richard and his team at Enable had in mind. Assurity Cloud hosts on-demand test assets customised to the requirements of individual customers; when upgrade cycles roll around, the assets are called upon to run the necessary evaluations.

Assurity got to work rapidly, creating a Proof-of-Concept demonstration which Richard says met all expectations. "It was a click of a button and then watching it execute. It just worked."

From there, the standard Assurity approach of delivering ERP test automation got underway. This 'Design, Build, Deliver' approach starts with analysing the technical domain, business processes, and internal capabilities to design a right-fit test automation framework; creation and implementation of the automation framework and supporting assets; and automation of the tests by operationalising the framework.

As with all solutions, Assurity took a national delivery approach combining people and expertise from across its New Zealand operations with a focus on customer outcomes and empowerment for future self-sufficiency.

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Results

To date, Richard says around 20 transactional, repeatable tests have been automated and reside in the Assurity Cloud, ready for Enable to call on as every upgrade cycle takes hold. "We request and use those tests as required, while also calling on Assurity for test expertise to complement the skills of our team; we're finance professionals, not test experts, and though we have a Business and Technology Innovation team, they have a lot of competing priorities and other systems to take care of," he notes.

From the two weeks of testing time once required of his team, Richard says it is now down to just three days. The test automation has relieved his people of tedious, repetitive work while improving their capacity to keep pace with vendor upgrades as they emerge. "This is just a starting point, too. As we continue figuring out the full capability of the Assurity Cloud, there will be further capacity for automation."

Already, Enable's calculations show a payback of under three years for the full cost of the solution. This is merely against the 'dollars and cents'; improvements in software quality and reductions in inane demands on worker time have their own long-term benefits.

Throughout the engagement, Richard has been impressed with the quality of delivery and professionalism baked into the Assurity delivery. "I've had four touchpoints, and the experience was superb. Their technical knowledge is right where it needs to be, and the resultant solution is quite satisfying."

He has a word for any organisation wrestling with upgrade cycles and the testing overhead: "Talk to someone and see what's possible. You might be surprised at what's out there, and you'll never know until you ask."

"This is just a starting point, too. As we continue figuring out the full capability of the Assurity Cloud, there will be further capacity for automation."

Richard Swift
Finance Systems Manager
Enable

At a glance

Company:
Enable

Industry:
Telecommunications

Requirements:

Enable migrated a legacy ERP system to Microsoft Dynamics Business Central in 2021 and resolved to keep the software updated for security reasons.

However, the finance team was spending two weeks every quarter testing the version upgrade, interfering with Business as Usual activities. Enable sought a more efficient testing regime to reduce overhead costs.

Solution:

• Assurity adopted a 'Design, Build, Deliver' approach, analysing Enable's technical domain, business processes and internal capabilities to design a right-fit automation framework.

• Delivered test automation services powered by Assurity Cloud Platform – a platform-as-a-service hosting on-demand test assets customised to individual requirements. The assets are called upon every upgrade cycle to run the necessary evaluations.

• Assurity also provides test expertise complementing the Enable Finance team's skills.

Outcomes Achieved:

• To date, 20 transactional, repeatable tests are automated and reside in the Assurity Cloud Platform, called on by Enable every upgrade cycle.

• Testing time is reduced from two weeks to three days

• Enable expects a payback (ROI) in under three years.