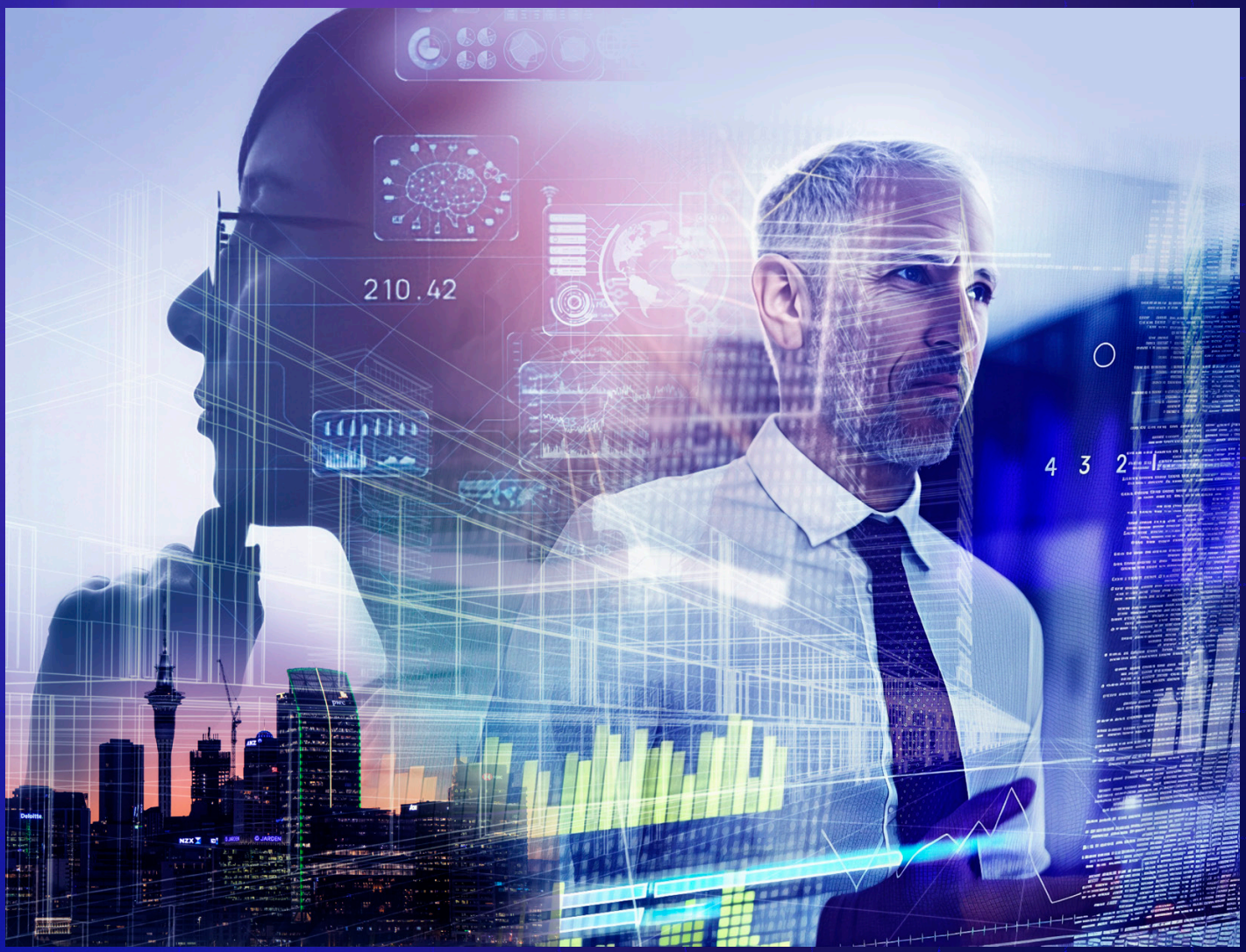
The quality-first blueprint: A QA approach to managing risk

How to deliver digital transformation with total confidence



ASSURITY

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Why foundations matter more than ever

In our decades of working across the technology sector, we have witnessed the landscape of New Zealand's digital infrastructure shift dramatically. We have moved from the era of monolithic, on-premises servers and siloed legacy systems to dynamic, integrated, cloud-native ecosystems. Yet, having worked with a diverse range of organisations – from agile private sector innovators to expanding startups, we have seen firsthand that while the technology stack changes, the core challenge remains constant: **A platform launch is not a destination; it is a high-stakes journey where quality is your only true compass.**

Assurity Consulting has been operating in New Zealand since 2005. Over the past two decades, we have provided **independent quality oversight** for some of the country's most significant transformations. This includes massive public sector overhauls like the Inland Revenue transformation, alongside critical private sector platform launches.

It is important to clarify that we are not system integrators; we do not build the platforms ourselves. Instead, we are the specialists who stress-test the blueprints, validate the architecture, and ensure that when you finally "flip the switch," the platform is reliable at scale. This e-guide is designed for **Test Managers, QA Leads, QA Managers, Programme Directors, and CIOs** navigating these complex waters.

Whether you are replacing a legacy CRM, a complex HRIS, or an enterprise ERP, the principles of quality engineering and risk management remain the same. This is your blueprint for long-term success.

A risk-based framework for platform transformation

A successful program roll-out aligns strictly with business strategy to create a sustainable competitive advantage. Whether modernisation is driven by the urgent need to replace legacy systems, the desire to standardise business processes, or the requirement for enhanced data analytics, the path to a stable production environment involves significant risk.

To mitigate this, we utilise a rigorous six-phase lifecycle approach. For QA Leads and Managers, understanding key focus areas in each phase to prevent project failure.

Program Phases Overview

A rigorous six-phase approach designed to maximise value realisation and eliminate technical debt through proactive management.

Phase 0

Strategy and planning

Organisational alignment and executive commitment.

QA FOCUS

Requirement feasibility and timeline testability audits.

Approved
Business Case

Budget
Secured

Phase 1

Blueprint design

Translating needs into actionable technical blueprints.

QUALITY LEVER

Sign-off on Fit-Gap ensuring testable BRD details.

Completed
Fit-Gap analysis

Signed
Design

Phase 2

Build and configure

Working system transformation ready for validation.

SHIFT-LEFT

Catching defects early via 95% unit test coverage.

95%+
Unit Tested

95%+
Data OK

Phase 3

Verification and validation

Rigorous Integration and UAT cycle confirmations.

QA LEVER

Data migration dry runs and defect lifecycle oversight.

Signed-off
UAT Results

≥85%
Pass Rate

Phase 4

Deploy and transition

Production cutover, training, and hypercare.

STABILITY

Zero-disruption cutover and knowledge gap closure.

100%
User Training

≥99%
Production Data Migration

Phase 5

Optimise

Scaling solutions and tracking benefit realisation.

EVOLUTION

Project to BAU transition and backlog management.

≥75%
User Satisfaction

Tracked
Benefit ROI

Figure 1: Six-phase transformation approach with defined durations, success criteria, and deliverables

Phase 0

Strategy and planning

(Starting the project right)

The objective: Ensuring organisational alignment and commitment by securing buy-in, selecting the right solution, and establishing governance before significant investment begins.

- **The focus:** The primary goal is to develop a business case approved with a clear Return on Investment (ROI).
- **Success criteria:** Secure a committed executive sponsor, select the vendor or solution, and ensure the programme budget is fully secured. Identifying a core team is essential to prevent resource bottlenecks later.
- **The QA lead's role:** The QA lead assesses the requirements and provides feedback to stakeholders regarding the feasibility of the proposed timeline and the testability of the high-level requirements.
- **Risks mitigated:** Strategic misalignment, Insufficient sponsorship, Unrealistic expectations.
- **Key artifacts:** The Business Case Document, Current State Assessment, Programme Charter, and Governance Framework.

Phase 1

Blueprint design

(Setting the right base for the build)

The objective: This phase translates business needs into actionable technical blueprints.

- **The focus:** Designing and documenting all the business processes. This phase can be utilised to review the existing processes and challenge the status quo rather than automating the existing, inefficient processes.
- **The quality lever:** Success in this phase is defined by a sign-off on process design and a “Fit-Gap” analysis showing at least an 80% fit with the selected solution.
- **The QA lead’s role:** Ensure the Business Requirements Document (BRD) and Integration Architecture Blueprint are detailed enough to generate specific test cases. If a requirement cannot be tested, it cannot be delivered.
- **Risks mitigated:** Requirements misunderstanding, Over-customisation, Scope creep.

Phase 2

Build and configure

(Getting the configurations right)

The objective: This phase transforms design documents into a working system ready for formal testing.

- **The focus:** The technical team focuses on 100% completion of system configuration and the development of any necessary custom code.
- **The quality lever:** Target a unit testing coverage of 95%+. This “shift-left” approach ensures that defects are caught by developers before they reach the formal testing stage, significantly reducing the cost of rework.
- **Data readiness:** A critical, often overlooked metric is the loading of master data. An ideal aim is for 95%+ of master data to be loaded during this phase to support realistic testing scenarios.
- **Risks mitigated:** Configuration quality risk, Data quality risk, High customisation risk.
- **Key artifacts:** Configuration Workbooks and Custom Code Documentation.

Phase 3

Verification and validation

(Preventing costly errors/failures)

The objective: This phase confirms the solution works as per the business requirements before go-live.

- **The focus:** Validating that the configured solution meets business requirements through a rigorous testing process. This includes Integration Testing, Business Process Testing, and User Acceptance Testing (UAT).
- **The quality lever:** Success requires a Data Migration Accuracy of ≥98%. This will have a high impact on how the solution works in Production. The aim will be to have a Test pass rate of ≥85% with no Sev1 and Sev 2 open defects to proceed to production.
- **The QA lead's role:** Managing the defect lifecycle, overseeing the multiple data migration dry runs, and ensuring that the UAT Sign-off Report represents genuine user confidence, not just a rubber stamp.
- **Risks mitigated:** User readiness, Undiscovered defects, Security vulnerability, Data migration failure.

Phase 4

Deploy and transition

(Implementing the solution correctly)

The objective: Execute the production cutover by migrating final data, training all end users, and transitioning to the new system within the planned downtime window.

- **The focus:** The physical cutover and the immediate post-go-live support period, known as “hypercare”.
- **The quality lever:** A successful go-live is defined by 100% of users being trained. Production migration accuracy must hit ≥99%.
- **Risks mitigated:** Cutover execution, Business disruption, User knowledge gap, System stability.
- **Key artifacts:** The Final Cutover Plan, Production Data Migration Report, and Hypercare Support Schedule.

Phase 5

Optimise

(Scaling of the solution)

The objective: This phase ensures the organisation maximises value from the investment over time.

- **The focus:** Transitioning from project support to business-as-usual (BAU) operations and tracking measurable business benefits.
- **The quality lever:** Long-term success is indicated by a user satisfaction score of ≥75%.
- **Risks mitigated:** Business benefit realisation, Continuous Improvement stagnation, Technical knowledge loss.
- **Key artifacts:** Benefits Realisation Report and Continuous Improvement Backlog.

Critical success factors for QA leaders

Based on our involvement in these projects and 21 years of broader market experience, we have identified five essential elements that determine the success of a transformation programme.

01

Leadership

Transformation requires a visible executive sponsor who is committed to the outcome. For QA Managers, this means having a direct line to leadership to flag risks. Clear ownership and timely decision-making are non-negotiable.

- Visible executive sponsor
- Clear ownership
- Resource commitment
- Timely decisions

02

Change management

Stakeholder engagement and multi-channel communications are vital. From a QA perspective, **role-based training** is essentially a form of “user testing” – ensuring the business users can actually use the system you have built.

- Stakeholder engagement
- Multi-channel communications
- Role-based training
- Resistance management

03

Process optimisation

Standardising your business processes before you configure the software. Utilising the design phase to challenge the status quo and adopt best practices which can be scalable.

- Standardise first
- Challenge status quo
- Best practices
- Scalability

04

Realistic Planning

Include a **contingency of 15–20%** in the projects timelines. Use a phased approach to identify risks early. Risk profile increases exponentially if testing timelines are reduced.

- Adequate timeline
- Contingency 15–20%
- Phased approach
- Early risk identification

05

Data Quality

Have an early assessment of the business data and identify the cleansing requirements. In our experience, data migration is the most common bottleneck in the final stages of a project.

- Early assessment
- Cleansing & remediation
- Master data governance
- Validation

Key Insight: Balanced focus on all five factors is essential for transformation success.

Governance: The anchor of transformation

To prevent the chaos that often accompanies large-scale change, clear accountability is mandatory. A governance framework establishes the structure for decision-making and accountability.

Crucially, this framework must include phase gates – formal checkpoint reviews where approval is required to proceed to the next stage. This prevents "green-shifting," where a project is reported as on-track despite underlying issues.

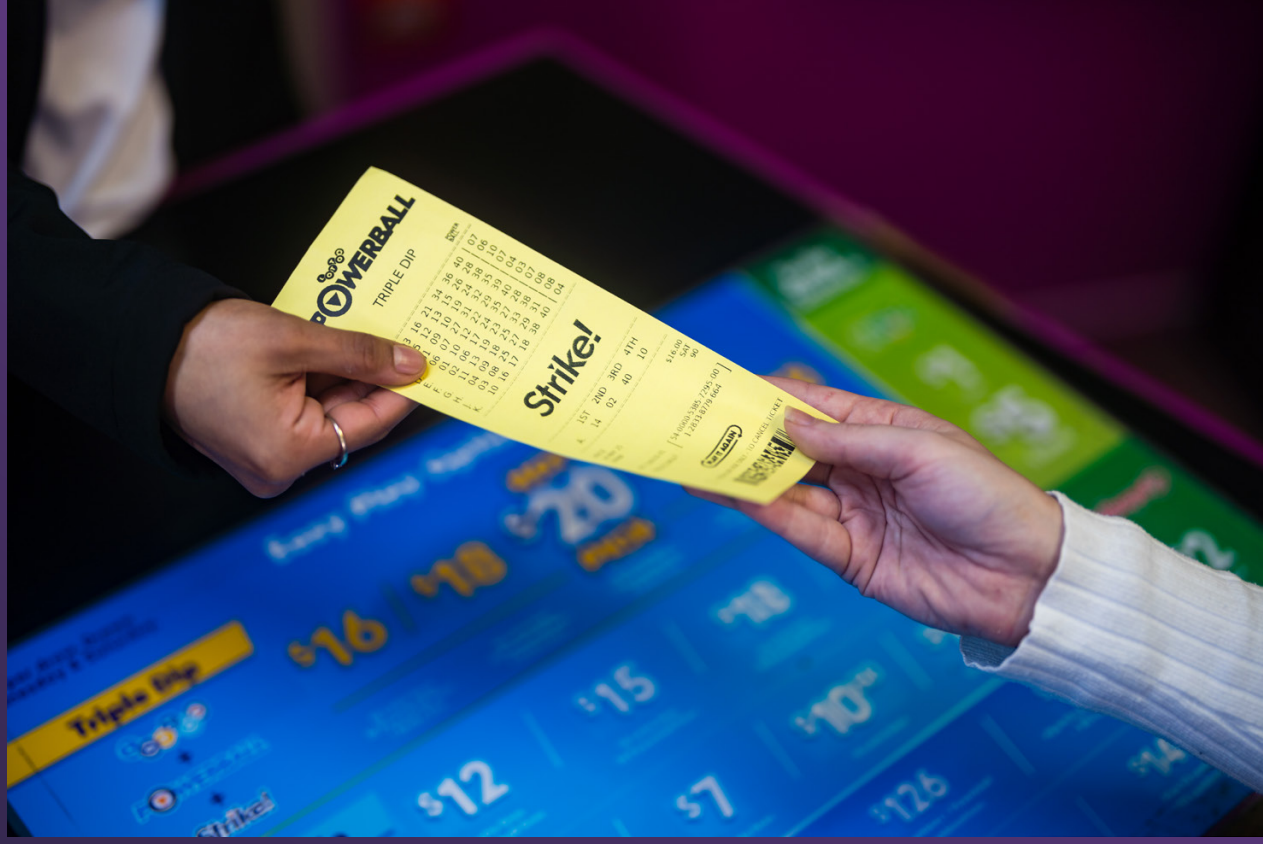
In a well-structured RACI matrix (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed):

- Executive Sponsor: Is Accountable (A) for the Business Case Approval and the final Go-Live Decision. They own the risk.
- Programme Director: Is Responsible (R) for the day-to-day Programme Planning and Vendor Selection.
- Subject Matter Experts (SMEs): Are Responsible (R) for Process Design and validating User Acceptance Testing results. They own the accuracy.

Core activity / deliverable	Exec Sponsor	SteerCo	PMO / PM	SME / Biz	Dev Team	Tech Arch	QA Team	Change Mgr
Business case & ROI development	A	C	R	I	C	C	C	I
Programme charter & governance setup	A	C	R	I	I	I	I	C
Risk management & register maintenance	I	C	R	I	R	C	R	C
Business Requirements Documentation (BRD)	I	I	A/R	R	S	C	S	I
Solution fit-gap analysis & design	I	C	R	C	A/R	R	R	I
Integrated test strategy & planning	I	I	S	C	C	C	A/R	I
Technical configuration & Unit Testing	I	I	S	I	R	C	R	I
Master data cleansing & extraction	I	I	S	C	R	C	R	I
Infrastructure & environment management	I	I	S	I	R	R	C	I
User Acceptance Testing (UAT) execution	I	I	S	R	C	C	A/R	C
Data migration dry run validations	I	C	S	C	A/R	C	R	I
UAT validation & final sign-off	C	C	S	A/R	I	C	C	I
Go-live readiness & cutover assessment	R	C	A/R	C	C	C	R	C
Production environment data migration	I	C	S	C	R	R	R	I
Final go/no-go decision steering	A	C	R	I	C	C	C	C
Post go-live hypercare support	I	I	A/R	I	R	R	C	C
Benefits realisation tracking & review	A	C	R	R	I	I	I	C
Programme lessons learned & handover	C	C	A/R	C	C	C	R	C

R = Responsible **A** = Accountable **S** = Supportive **C** = Consulted **I** = Informed

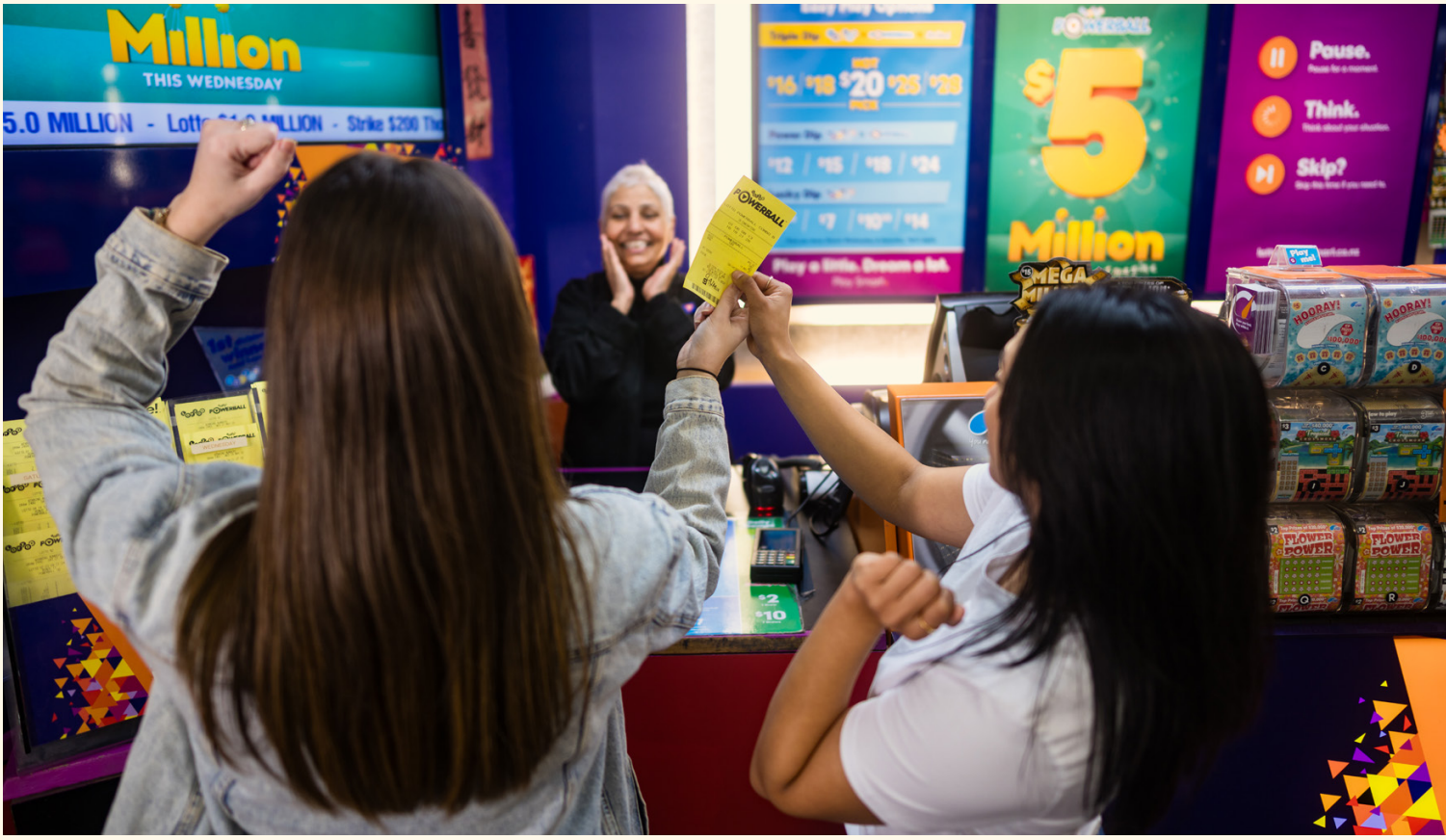
Figure 2: roles and responsibilities for a digital transformation programme



Real-world application: Transforming with confidence

Our successful transformation stories cover a vast spectrum of clients, from national gaming entities to agile startups. Recently, we played a pivotal role in Lotto New Zealand's core gaming system transition and the launch of the Cashpoints platform.

Case study: Lotto New Zealand – A seamless system transition



Lotto New Zealand set out to replace its long-standing gaming system while keeping service steady across retail and digital channels. With high public trust at stake, Lotto partnered with Assurity Consulting to manage the transition's complexity and strengthen quality assurance.

The situation: High stakes and extreme demand

- **Core system replacement:** Lotto needed to replace its system without disrupting customer experiences online or in-store. The EDGE Programme included upgrading 1140 retail stores with new terminals that all had to go live on the same day.
- **Volatile demand:** The platform needed to perform consistently whether handling a $4 million draw or a $50 million draw.
- **Specialist capabilities:** Lotto's internal QA team needed augmentation with broad experience, specifically in ad hoc capabilities like performance testing, to manage the programme's scale.

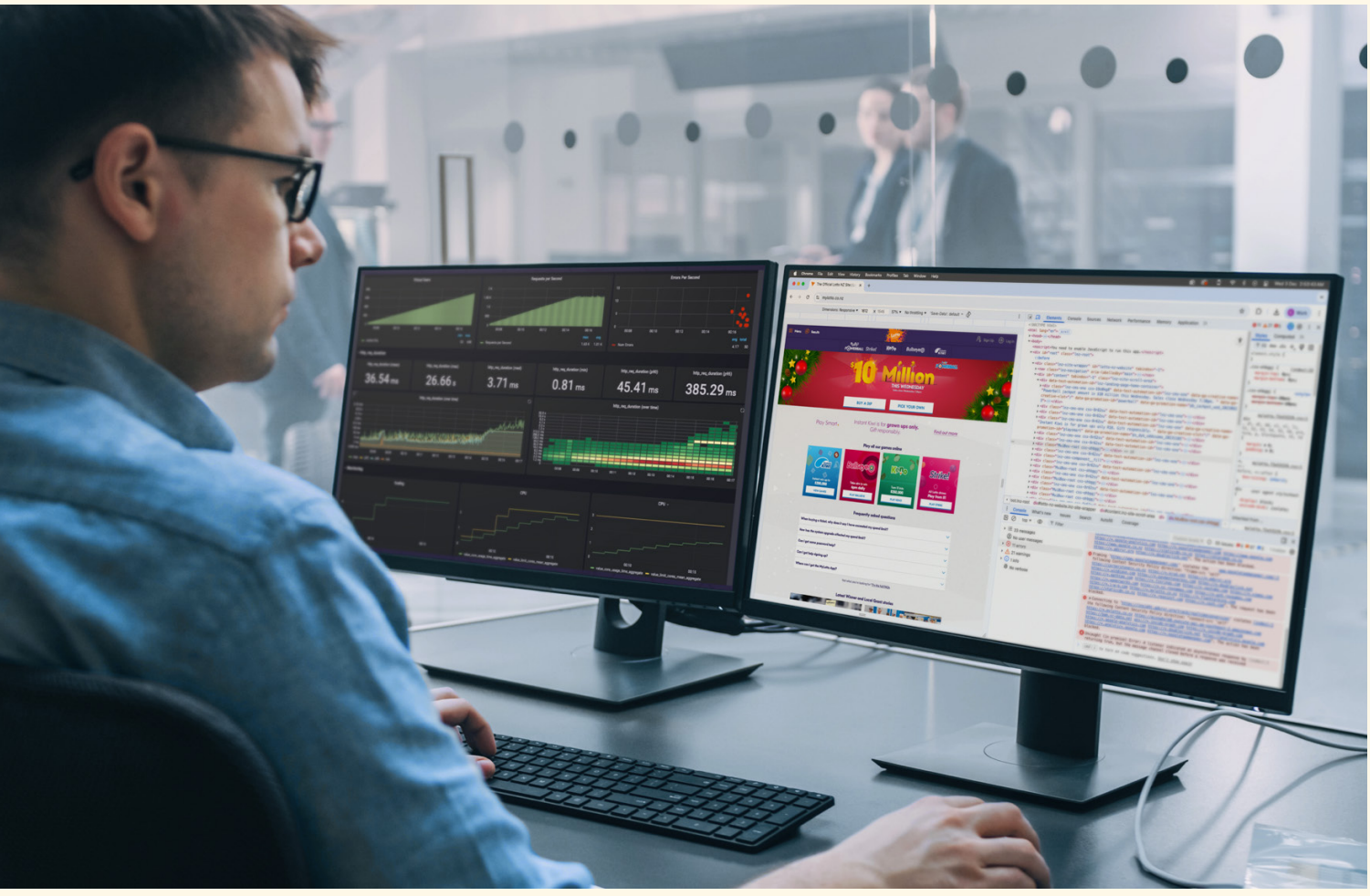
The Assurity approach: Seamless integration and rigorous coverage

- **One team model:** Assurity staff integrated with vendors and internal teams as a single unit, growing to 15 people at the project's peak.
- **Massive test execution:** Assurity contributed to designing the testing framework and executing more than 14,000 test cases. This coverage included System Integration Testing, Functional Testing, and Data Migration Testing.
- **Performance modelling:** The team utilised mathematically modelled stress testing to ensure the platform could handle extreme demand.

The result: Flawless execution under pressure

The transition was a seamless launch delivered on time and under budget. The system successfully handled a record $55 million draw with zero performance issues, despite traffic hitting the system like a DDOS attack. Ultimately, Lotto maintained uninterrupted service for players across all channels, proving the new platform was ready to handle demand at any scale.

Read full case study here.



Case study: Cashpoints – A blueprint for startup reliability

While Lotto New Zealand represents national scale, Cashpoints illustrates how startups can build enterprise-grade reliability without an enterprise-grade budget.

Cashpoints is a new loyalty programme provider offering retailers a shared rewards platform.

The situation: Lean and reliable

Midway through 2024, Cashpoints began building a platform that had to integrate with point-of-sale systems, mobile apps, and partner portals.

- **Trust:** As a new entrant, reliability and data privacy were critical to securing retailer confidence.
- **Budget constraints:** As a lean startup, they needed full QA (Quality Assurance) coverage but needed it to be cost-efficient.
- **Complexity:** The build involved diverse components, including retailer dashboards, admin portals, and transactional APIs.

The Assurity approach: The hybrid “Innovation Hub”

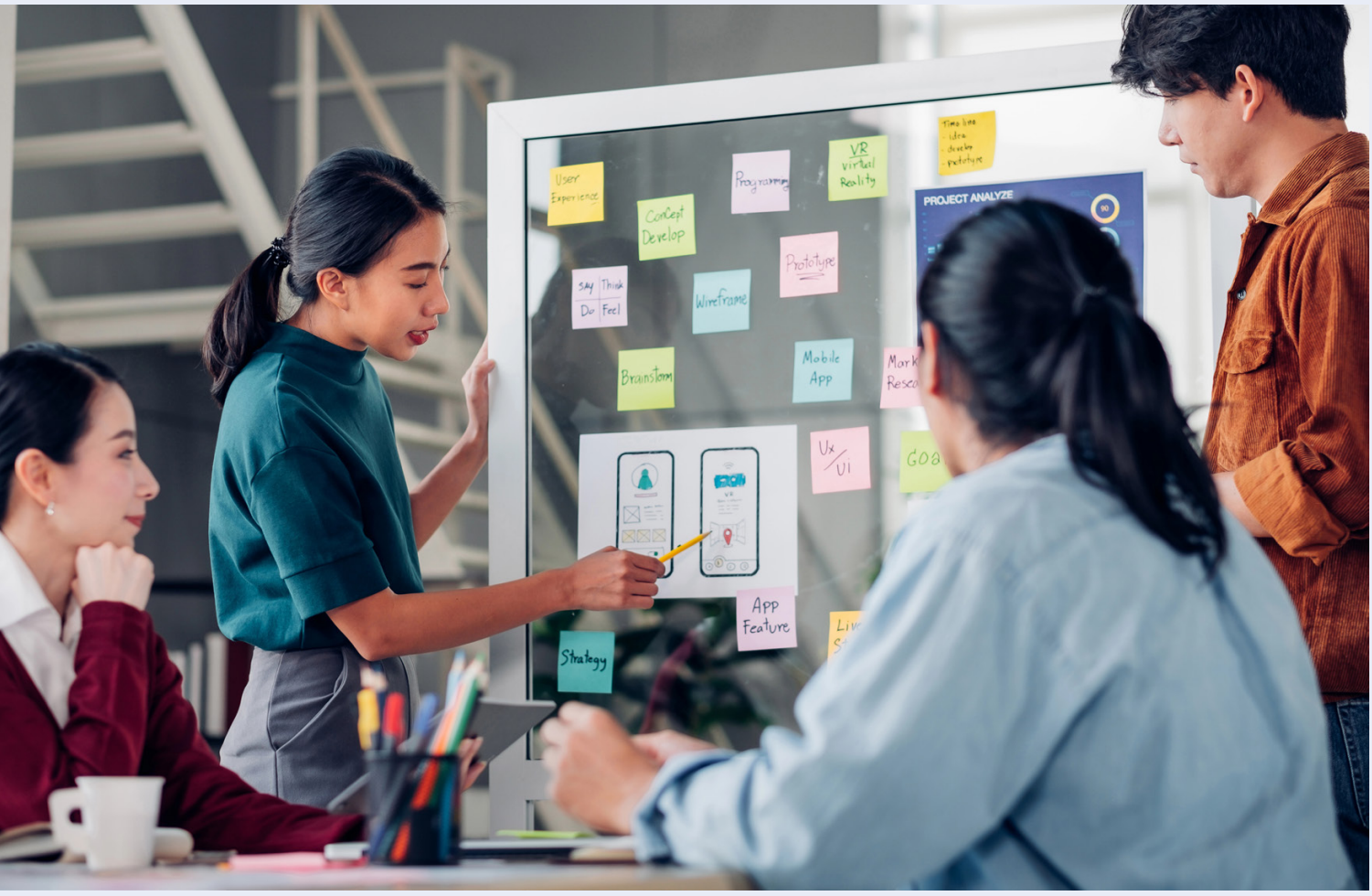
To solve the cost-versus-quality dilemma, Assurity utilised its Integrated Innovation Hub, a hybrid delivery model.

- **The model:** We combined Manila-based test engineers with local New Zealand oversight.
- **One team:** Testers were not distant contractors; they joined early in the build, participating in weekly technical huddles and Slack channels.
- **Local context:** An NZ-based QA Manager with retail experience ensured that the testing aligned with the nuances of the local market.

The result: Launch ready

Cashpoints launched successfully across five partners and 300+ retail locations. The hybrid model allowed them to maintain full coverage while keeping resourcing affordable. The team “caught edge cases early” and provided a stable, launch-ready platform.

Read full case study here.



CONCLUSION

Whether you are leading a complex core system transformation like Lotto New Zealand, or a founder launching a disruptive new platform like Cashpoints, the foundations you build today will determine your reliability tomorrow.

Digital transformation is inherently risky. Technical debt, data migration failures, and user resistance are constant threats. However, by embedding quality engineering and rigorous risk management from the very first phase – strategy – you move from “flipping a switch” and hoping for the best, to launching with total confidence.

Assurity Consulting remains committed to helping New Zealand organisations navigate these journeys. Our experience shows that while every project is unique, the requirement for a disciplined, quality-first approach is universal.

Whether you are overhauling legacy infrastructure or building a new digital ecosystem, the risks of failure are the same. Would you like to speak with one of our specialists about a Quality Readiness Assessment for your upcoming transformation or launch? If yes, contact us here or connect with either of us via the contact details on the next page.

Planning for long-term success

About the authors

Ragesh Nair

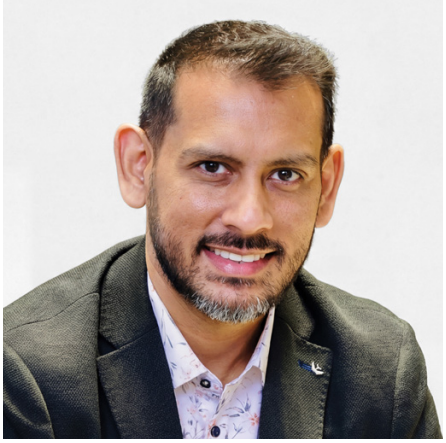
Senior Test Manager, Assurity Consulting

With 18 years of experience across the technology sector, Ragesh has built a career focused on the strategic delivery of high-stakes digital transformations and core platform launches.

While his personal project history is deeply rooted in the private sector, Ragesh works alongside a collective of experts at Assurity who have secured the integrity of New Zealand's most essential public services since 2005. His expertise lies in navigating the complexities of risk management, quality assurance, and quality engineering to ensure that new systems are not only delivered on time but are reliable at scale.

Ragesh is a firm believer that a platform launch is a journey where quality must serve as the primary compass. He is dedicated to helping both enterprise leaders and startup founders build the rigorous foundations necessary for long-term operational success.

Connect with Ragesh via email or LinkedIn.



Shikar Ramchand

Practice & Solutions Manager, Assurity Consulting

Shikar brings close to two decades of specialised experience in quality assurance and strategic delivery.

He specialises in guiding organisations through high-stakes business transformations and complex ERP replacements. His portfolio spans the logistics, telecommunications, financial services, and government sectors, where he ensures that technical quality aligns perfectly with business value.

Shikar is driven by a commitment to bridging the gap between QA and wider delivery teams. He champions the use of the latest technologies and innovative testing solutions to drive efficiency. Beyond the technical, he is passionate about coaching teams, empowering them to deliver reliability in today's fast-paced digital environments.

Connect with Shikar via email or LinkedIn.

About Assurity Consulting

Assurity Consulting, established in 2005, is New Zealand's trusted partner in Quality Engineering. Their expertise lies in delivering secure, scalable, and reliable software solutions tailored for organisations. They achieve this through Quality by Design and Managed Quality Solutions via AI-driven and Cloud-led platforms. Assurity provides efficient, reusable testing frameworks for enterprise platforms, including Microsoft D365, Workday, Salesforce, and Oracle. Their human-centric approach ensures secure, scalable, and reliable software solutions that empower organisations to innovate and deliver measurable outcomes with confidence.

In 2026, we began a new chapter by joining the Aspire Systems family. This partnership connects our deep local expertise with the global scale of 4,500 professionals and world-class AI testing capabilities. While we remain proudly New Zealand-led, we now offer our clients the best of both worlds: local care with global power.

Learn more at www.assurity.co.nz

Visit us at assurity.nz

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Transform with total confidence