

# Axe - Addressing the Key Business Issues in IT

A recent survey of Board members by Computing revealed some fascinating issues revealing how IT is hindering business progress.

At Odin Technology we concur with the identification and priorities of this issues and as a New Generation approach to test automation (itself a key facet in changing IT delivery) we have paraphrased how Axe can help tackles these business issues, placing automation as a key weapon in helping business meet their objectives.

The survey found the following issues were cited by executives:

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| • <b>Enhancing operational efficiency</b> | <b>76%</b> |
| • <b>Innovation</b>                       | <b>51%</b> |
| • <b>Developing new products</b>          | <b>41%</b> |
| • <b>Entry to new markets</b>             | <b>40%</b> |
| • <b>Improving Price competitiveness</b>  | <b>39%</b> |
| • <b>Responding to globalisation</b>      | <b>23%</b> |



This short article explains the ways in which Axe could contribute to solving a part of some of these problems.

## Enhancing operational efficiency

Clearly one of the major requirements of any organisation who is to survive in its chosen sector must be operational efficiency. Since 2000 the perception of IT has needed to change from a “necessary evil” into “demonstrating value for money”. Operational efficiency can be viewed as comprising some of the following attributes:

- Speed and cost of delivery
- Flexibility and the ability to change quickly
- The deskilling of tasks, so that they can be delivered quicker and more effectively and at a lower cost
- The ability to “port” processes, skills and jobs to areas of the globe where these can be delivered more effectively from a cost, reliability and on-going basis

Axe tackles the first of these by dramatically reducing the initial cost of delivery of automation by up to 75% whilst de-skilling the process to allow testers to focus on the delivery of new functionality to meet business change.

In terms of flexibility, Axe has re-written the “automated testing” rules. It supports the development and delivery of test cases in an “Agile” approach whilst future-proofing the investment in Test Assets should a particular automation toolset be changed. The ability to run regression packs on a “continuous” basis means that defects can be isolated and corrected quickly and the overall delivery process shortened. Testing can in part therefore be carried out in sync with development and rapidly repeated to deliver business requirements quicker and in a more robust state.

Axe was developed to stop Testers having to learn development skills to automate tests. Axe uses the tool used by 97% of testers – Microsoft® Excel as the cornerstone of its approach. Encompassing all of the functional excellence of Excel in developing test cases, Axe simplifies the required tester’s technical knowledge to the use of five action words and not hundreds of commands. The fact that automation can be run “out of hours” increases the tester’s productivity dramatically and allows the tester to focus on the business “in-hand” to deliver the business requirements at a rapid pace.

Axe is a “real world” tool, unencumbered by geography but recognising the need to operate in potentially different ways across locations. As outsourcing increases, so does the possibility of insourcing! Because Axe stores its test assets in Excel, these are easily transported, assimilated and put to use by testers across the globe. Added to this, the fact that Axe also supports and generates scripts in all the leading test tool vendors’ execution tools enables the use of different tools to be made should this be required. Above all of this, Axe produces auditable documentation and results which allow the business to understand what has been tested with what success. Thus even if you are testing in Mumbai and generating business change in the UK, control is not lost and auditability is preserved.

## Innovation

Axe leads the Next Generation Automation movement, embracing all the leading test tools and their powerful functionality and delivering it to the tester via a simple to use interface. Axe also includes the ability to use open-source tools and develop test cases using .NET constructs easily and rapidly. It can be easily extended by the customer to tailor testing to its specific need or applications. It also supports the leading Test Management tools and allows a seamless integration of test results. Axe covers both the GUI (UI) and SOA aspects of testing, delivering true "end to end" automation ability whilst using the same universal tool Excel at its heart. Thus enabling testers to quickly get over the technical aspects of SOA testing and once again solving once "difficult" testing problems.

## Developing New Products

IT has been famous for its inability to deliver new products to the business in time! Taking any approach to the Systems Development lifecycle (SDLC), three major factors emerge – Requirements being correct, Testing and the time it takes and finally the rectification and re-test of defects. Axe solves a number of these problems by being adaptable to which ever method of development / testing is chosen whether "V-Model" or "Agile". Axe delivers an understandable interface (English documentation) to keep the three parties, Business, Development and Test synchronised. By a thorough lowest level granularity of reporting, defects can be quickly determined, requirements and the defect corrected and the whole process repeated until successful!

## Entry to new markets

Axe doesn't claim to have a direct impact in this area! However indirectly the fact that Axe is easy to learn, uses globalised standard products and is easily transportable does open up new potential avenues. The training of an "Axe tester" can be completed in a single day; this means that IT can match the rapid start-up requirements of business into new markets. Most new markets require "IT enablement" once established, for example over the Internet there is a requirement to change and adapt quickly on an on-going basis. Axe delivers on this promise by allowing rapid automation of test cases supporting the new market channel and compounding this by reducing on-going maintenance costs.

## Improving price competitiveness

IT is a major contributor to "Overhead" cost within an organisation dependent on which sector the organisation operates in. IT itself can be viewed as having a number of cost facets: infrastructure, networks, people, software. Axe can be used across the lifecycle to improve IT efficiency and thus reduce the overall cost of IT. Generally 30% of IT development costs are spent on testing – even so this often delivers quality below that required by the business. In our experience, we have seen clients saving up to 75% in automation costs and between 78%-86% in terms of on-going maintenance. Multiply these factors by the IT development cost and this could add significant benefit to a business' bottom line profit, thus allowing a further ability to increase price competitiveness and reduce the price to the end customer .

## Responding to globalisation

Axe certainly supports the ability to "Go Global Quickly". The ramp-up times for Axe combined with the tools functionality are unrivalled in the current market. Axe becomes effectively an "automated testing environment" allowing the exchange of Test assets and scripts to be easily carried out globally. Automation allows a 24-hour testing window as it is effectively "unmanned", with a global 24 hour approach and Axe's productivity features this can be extended globally to give the maximum productivity possible.

In addition, because the Test assets are preserved at a simplistic but powerful level in Excel, the assets are not technical and thus can be migrated between teams quickly and easily as the business needs dictate.

So Axe enables the ability to outsource, offshore, in-source or near-shore as the business requires without the test assets degrading. This is in stark contrast to some offshoring activities which have resulted in poor quality testing, un-maintainable scripts and the un-enviuous "tie-in" to products which become obsolescent over time.

**The choice is yours, but if like most of the industry is struggling to tackle these real business issues, wouldn't it be worth contacting Odin Technology to find out how we can help you tackle these problems successfully now and in the future?**