NORDICS (EXCLUDING SWEDEN)

Keenness and determination

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THE CLOSER YOU LOOK

Last year we noted that the Nordic countries were keen to make progress in quality engineering and this year this enthusiasm is still very much evident. The move to agile and DevOps development environments continues, albeit slowly. Adopting DevOps requires not just technological change, but organizational change, and in our view, the most successful organizations are those that recognize this.

The transition to the cloud also continues, but in different ways and to different degrees, defined by the purpose of individual organizations. Some of them are adopting a multi-cloud strategy, but what they gain in breadth and independence, they lose in the benefits they would accrue from the dedicated tools that platforms offer.

What's driving quality engineering?

There are several areas of focus for quality. One of the more recent growth areas is non-functional testing such as security, robustness, performance, and scalability, especially in cloud platform developments. Security is top of mind: recent cyber-attacks have catalyzed organizations to revisit their security operations and the mindset is moving from reactivity to thinking ahead – to what we might term security by design. This is because some of the major attacks have shifted left. Rather than focusing on operations, they have targeted the development stage. To achieve the level of proactivity needed to counter threats like these, the region needs people who have sufficient infrastructure knowledge to incorporate robust security measures up-front.

A further driver of quality is customer experience (CX) and its impetus has made quality engineering (QE) everyone's responsibility. This is a most welcome development – we've been waiting for years for this to happen – but it needs to be tempered with realism. Organizations need to develop realistic expectations of what's possible.

It may still be at an early stage, but it's fair to say that sustainability issues are also driving QE. There is a big focus here on sustainable IT and governments have developed a green IT strategy that's added to the momentum. Tools are available to measure carbon footprints in the cloud and service providers are continuing to develop tools specifically to measure sustainability in testing.

Specific skill needs

As is so often the case, the ability to make progress is conditioned by the availability of talent. This need is conditioned by a preference for people who speak the local languages, which limits the potential talent pool. As we've just noted, non-functional skills are much in demand. So too are skills in test automation. In demanding DevOps projects involving a great deal of integration, combined strengths in technology and coding would be useful. In fact, in our view, test automation skills ought to be a given rather than a strategic desire.

Work in progress

In summary, there are many reasons to be optimistic this year. We have reached a stage in the region where it's accepted that quality is everyone's responsibility. It's also worth noting that there is now much more focus on non-functional testing.

Of course, there's still work to be done. More IT professionals are needed with more technical and infrastructure skills. Test management has made a comeback, creating a need for people with agile, technical, and communication skills.

But these are challenges to which we're confident our countries will rise. The keenness is there – and so is the determination.

Survey watch: Agile Quality Maturity of Nordics organizations

58% of agile teams have professional quality engineers integrated

60% of agile teams have test automation implemented

57% of teams achieved better reliabiity of systems through test automation

58% of teams achieved faster release times through test automation

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