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| **A New Quality Assurance Regime Takes Root in MS GPD, Preventing Software Defects and Detecting Them Early** by Wolcott WheelerIt’s important that when a company releases a software product, all necessary steps have been taken to detect possible bugs prior to release.  It makes for happy clients and end users—and happy software creators, too.  At MS GPD, the importance of quality assurance (QA) is obvious; we must do the best possible job of detecting defects in our software programs (and properly fix and then re-test them) before clients receive a new release.  Preventing the defects is even better.Since Jeremy Lehman arrived as the global leader of MS GPD last year, there’s been a new emphasis on Quality Assurance, implemented by Larry Cohen, Chief Testing Strategist and Global Head of Quality Assurance for EMS.  Working closely with Jon Williams, CTO of CheetahMail Development NA, and Alex Lucero, head of Global Operations and QA, Larry has been instituting a new regime of Quality Assurance at CheetahMail NA.  Eventually he intends to apply those new QA standards to the rest of MS GPD as best practices.**larry_cohen_accelerated_computing_solutions - zoom -  color****Larry Cohen, GPD’s new head of QA**                                                 By instituting this new regime of QA, MS GPD is executing against its Five Point Plan priorities.  Approximately eight months ago, senior leadership identified the maturation of the QA process as a priority.  As a testing ground, MS GPD is focusing on the release of CheetahMail NA’s new email platform Fusion 3.0, which introduces a Segmentation User Interface, enabling clients to query email activity data directly from the email database.**QA Isn’t Testing**“Most people confuse quality assurance, quality control, and testing,” Larry said.  “An example of quality control is testing a completed program to find defects.  True quality assurance is *process*-focused defect *prevention,* not *product*-focused defect *detection*.  *Preventing* defects early in our Software Development Life Cycle [SDLC], instead of just detecting them at the end, will provide more value to our business and clients, with possibly over a 100 times improvement in ROI [return on investment].”Jon Williams said, “Larry is building upon and leveraging the demonstrated skills and dedication of our great QA teams in New York, Los Angeles, and Kuala Lumpur to achieve his goal of creating a QA Center of Excellence.”jon-williams**Jon Williams**MS GPD has been strengthening its QA procedures by creating a stronger QA talent bench and implementing:* rigorous test planning,
* new feature integration testing,
* functional regression testing,
* automated testing,
* load testing, and
* performance testing.

Larry has over 20 years in QA, testing, and management, with a degree in electrical engineering from Stanford and 13 years in R&D at the prestigious Bell Labs, where he developed sophisticated computer chips that had to be 100% perfect the first time.  He has also provided QA and testing solutions to major corporations such as Citigroup, Merrill Lynch, and JPMorgan Chase.“Larry lives and breathes QA,” said Alex Lucero.  “He has a real passion for it.”**Fusion 3.0: The Testing Ground**Since arriving at MS GPD this May, Larry has been laying the groundwork for rigorous measures to improve the quality of GPD’s software.  “Right now we’re implementing QA procedures to prepare for the release of CheetahMail’s Fusion 3.0,” he said.  “We’ve been undertaking functionality testing to ensure the new features work as expected, in addition to regression testing to test old functionality to guarantee the old code *still* works once all the new features are introduced.”  Fusion 3.0 is scheduled to be released October 13.In addition, Larry is introducing automated performance testing via a physical staging environment in Los Angeles that duplicates our production system, rather than using “virtual machines” that replicate a virtual environment.  In addition to automated functional regression testing, he is implementing negative testing to ensure the application *doesn’t* do what it’s *not* supposed to.  QA TEAM - from Larry Cohen - Final**The CheetahMail QA team in New York, hard at work testing***But testing doesn’t increase quality—it only measures it*.  Improving the quality of our software actually takes three steps: * detection,
* correction, and
* verification through re-testing.

Next he will be applying rigorous test case management, automated regression testing, and performance testing across our email platforms, an important step in preparation for Conversen’s smooth integration with CheetahMail NA.  He will also institute unstructured testing to explore better ways to “break” our applications. **Collaborating with Development** In the future, the QA teams will stress defect prevention by very close collaboration with Development to produce higher quality code, employing more of an Agile methodology of quickly and effectively developing and releasing new features of a program, rather than the old waterfall approach, when a program is developed as a single project from beginning to end.  Agile has major advantages; it saves the expenses that can be caused by waterfall’s late detection of defects, the client gets more frequent releases of working code, and there’s less risk of waterfall’s potential major glitches.Larry said, “As part of our new Agile strategy of in-sprint testing, we will embed testers with a development background within the Development team as it creates code.  These testers will create tools for developers and other testers for specific types of advanced testing.”  Ben John, VP Development, CheetahMail NA, said, “The new close collaboration between QA and Development is clearly paying off.  The in-sprint testing we’re doing now is remedying a lot of problems before our release.”BenJohn_IMG_6828**Ben John****A Metrics-Driven QA Process** MS GPD is adopting a metrics-driven QA process.  “If you can’t measure quality, you can’t control it,” Larry said.  Just for the Fusion 3.0 release, over 8,000 test cases have been tested manually through multiple passes; over 3,000 new feature tests have been executed by one team, plus over 5,000 regression tests have been performed by another team to ensure that the rest of the program *hasn’t* “regressed” to a worse state.  Larry works closely with Ken Rothstein, QA Manager for CheetahMail NA, whom he promoted from within the organization; Ken worked in QA before Larry’s arrival.  “Our new management team has shown a serious commitment to QA, and Larry has been responsible for upgrading a great deal of our QA procedures,” Ken said.  “We’re definitely moving in the right direction on regression testing, and the Agile mode of in-sprint testing has been tremendously beneficial.”Ken Rothstein - Final**Ken Rothstein**Larry emphasized that MS GPD’s new QA regime has only been successful because of the support of a talented international team; unfortunately, space limitations restrict us from citing them all.The end result of all this better testing?“When everything is in place, the client will enjoy improved software and better performance,” Larry said.  “Coupling that with exciting new innovations for our future products and platforms, we’ll have very happy clients, and we’ll release products that we’re proud of.  And we’ll devastate our competition.” |

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Wolcott Wheeler

Internal Communications Specialist

Experian Marketing Services - Global Product Development

1271 Avenue of the America, 45th Floor

New York, NY 10020

Direct:  +1 (212) 448-6485

Mobile:  +1 (914) 826-5188

Email: wolcott.wheeler@experian.com