

IT Metrics and KPI's

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Tech Guide: Automated Software Testing

Sophisticated software development projects demand sophisticated tools. Automated testing tools have come a long way, and there's more to come.

By Karen D. Schwartz, [InformationWeek](#)

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TECH GUIDE Back in the 1990s, when IT budgets were particularly tight, testing tools were often the first victims, deemed unnecessary in the face of more pressing concerns. Often, IT manager dispensed with the use of automated testing tools when developers were running late, figuring that manual testing would suffice.

No longer. The software world is increasingly complex. Today's software is multitiered, distributed, and integrated, often involving next-generation processes such as Web services. In the past few years, a strong push to integrate Web-based technologies with traditional systems, such as enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer-relationship management (CRM), or back-end mainframe systems has increased the complexity even further.

Vendors catering to the software-testing market are incorporating more advanced features, and integrating various types of testing capabilities, to create more-coordinated suites of testing tools. Today's tools are more efficient, accurate, and thorough. They're also easier to use and can test a greater variety of functions than previous generations of testing tools.

These advances are responsible in large part for many companies' developing formal testing methodologies--something that was relatively rare several years ago. Witness financial services company H&R Block Inc. Although quality assurance has been part of a structured approach to software testing for the company for the past eight years, "it's when the processes began to mature and we began to learn more about quality assurance and the types of tools that were available that we became more interested and willing to invest in those types of tools," says Mike Deloney, director of quality assurance. Today, H&R Block uses tools from a variety of software testing companies, including Compuware Corp. and Empirix Inc.

Testing Deconstructed

Most experts agree that it's important to test applications for functionality, scalability, and performance at every step of the process: preproduction, production, and postproduction.