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DGI Interop Update

Your Guide to Interoperability & Conformance Test Services

January 2007

in this issue

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**Commentary --
Interoperability Tests:
A Low-Cost Extension of
QA Department**

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A growing benefit for software vendors is that Drummond Certified interoperability tests provide them with a low-cost, high-yield extension of their own software QA departments. Drummond Group's (DGI's) full-matrix interoperability testing allows vendors to test their products in perhaps the closest thing to a real-world production environment without actual deployment at a client site. Live, real-world test scenarios between remotely distributed instances of different vendor products allow DGI to accurately determine a product's interoperability. In addition, these tests provide vendors with rare opportunities to test against numerous real-world products instead of just in-house testing tools and harnesses.

A critical factor of success in this effort is the neutrality DGI brings to the competitive mix of software vendors. Instead of all vendors testing against one vendor's products to ensure interoperability, these tests are run full matrix which tests all products against all products. No one vendor is given priority over another.

Each test begins with a phase dedicated to product configuration and connectivity. Vendors experience real-world obstacles they might only otherwise encounter during deployment at a client site, such as issues involving certification exchange and network firewall and connectivity considerations.

Following the connectivity phase is a debug phase in which all the test scenarios are exercised in a practice

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run fashion allowing software vendors to capture and resolve software bugs and interoperability issues. During the software development process, developers and QA personnel put the product through a series of testing phases, and all efforts are made to ensure that the product is conformant to the underlying standards. However, no matter how rigorous an internal testing process may be, the moment the product is expected to integrate with software developed by competitors, issues impossible to predict are often discovered. Standards go a long way in facilitating product and system integration, but standards are not perfect and neither is their interpretation by a number of disparate implementing organizations. DGI interoperability testing provides software vendors with a safe and relatively low stress forum to test and debug their products against their competitors before the rubber hits the road in a production environment at the client site.

The costs associated with finding and resolving software bugs and interoperability issues after a product is deployed is expensive and the resulting customer frustrations could also affect future sales of software. In comparison, the costs with finding and resolving software bugs and interoperability issues during an interoperability test are small with no risk of customer involvement or risk of future sales.

Interoperability testing with DGI provides software vendors an opportunity to test their software against the widest code base possible. It is not uncommon for some B2B vendors to invest in licensed copies of their competitor's products and construct elaborate test labs in order to fully debug their products in a simulated production environment. **However, the annual license and resource costs to maintain test labs of this magnitude far outweigh the costs associated with participating in DGI interoperability testing**, and full-matrix testing with DGI ensures the product is tested against all competitor products, not just a subset that most internal test labs contain.

There is no substitute for rigorous internal testing conducted by developers and QA personnel. But, no matter how good these processes are, product issues surface during full-matrix interoperability testing. By allowing DGI to extend your QA department, software companies benefit by being provided with a robust simulated production test lab without the high cost and difficulty of maintaining one in-house.

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