

CitiPower and Powercor use JDS for Support



Supplying electricity to more than a million customers

CitiPower and Powercor are Australia's leading electricity distributors owned by Cheung Kong Infrastructure Ltd (CKI) and Power Assets Holdings Ltd. Combined, the Group operate the largest electricity distribution network in Victoria servicing over a million customers across the state, as well as services to ETSA Utilities, South Australia and Wellington Electricity, New Zealand.

Software critical to deliver energy supplies

Operating in a highly controlled industry, and tasked with providing critical services around the clock, the combined Group relies heavily on its information technology infrastructure to deliver energy to customers and to meet regulatory requirements.

The Group's IT infrastructure is complex to say the least. With over eleven critical business applications, 2,000 users, and multifaceted interfaces to a central information hub for the business facing systems alone, delivery expectations on the IT department are high.

Real-time information from the electricity network such as usage patterns, meter data and consumption is required by field staff, the Group, and the government regulator. Information accuracy and availability can mean the difference between someone getting power or not. Significant penalties apply for missing the mark, so it's important that the IT department gets it right.

"Technology underpins the ability for CitiPower and Powercor to safely and effectively deliver power to more than a million customers. It's critical that our applications are current, functioning and available," said Fiona Hocking, CSA Assurance Team Leader, Powercor.

To deliver on its strategic objectives, the Group mandates that the IT department provides high-performing business applications with a 99.8% availability rate and a zero tolerance for level one defects.

"JDS Support has provided outstanding service levels. I can have skilled technicians on-site quickly if I need, and can access a large pool of expertise for trouble shooting."

*Fiona Hocking
POWERCOR*

Developing a QA capability

As an internal service provider, the CitiPower and Powercor Quality Assurance Team had to define how to best facilitate enterprise testing capabilities with limited resources and tight timeframes.

At any one time, an application could be managing 20 to 30 test cycles, with over 6500 defects being handled across its project lifecycle. The Quality Assurance Team quickly identified that HP QC could be of immediate benefit to application owners. Providing a holistic view of an application's testing status would allow an application owner to assess priorities, allocate resources, and deliver quality applications on time and to specification.

In order to be effective and highly responsive when called upon by stakeholders, the Quality Assurance Team identified three key areas for HP QC success. Firstly, they enlisted JDS Support services to ensure that HP QC continued to be operational with fast issue resolution.

"When it comes to HP QC, JDS keeps the lights switched on. We simply don't have to worry about HP QC not being available or operational. JDS ensures that we are aware of product developments, new features and functions, and that our system is kept healthy. I know that any time I call them, they can answer my questions. Our HP QC users have aggressive targets, and using JDS as support means that we can keep our users happy," said Fiona Hocking.

Secondly, the QA Team packaged training programs that could be easily rolled out when required. As each testing requirement is based on secondment, an application owner can nominate different testers as deemed appropriate. Given that testing groups have often never used testing tools, the QA Team has to equip new testers with the skills needed to get the job done.

"HP QC is very customisable to meet the needs of each specific project. This means that we have to be nimble enough to roll out project-specific training. The fact that HP QC is intuitive makes the training process easier. In some cases we can train the basics to large groups in less than thirty minutes," said Hocking.

Thirdly, the QA Team assists project teams by helping define testing requirements, developing test scripts, and leveraging HP QC for optimal outcomes.

"Since we were tasked with rolling out HP QC capabilities across the enterprise, we have increased its use by 78% and improved user-uptake by 67%," said Fiona Hocking.

Maintaining quality applications under pressure

With a solid Quality Assurance platform in place that is supported by JDS, CitiPower and Powercor are now better placed to maintain quality applications under pressure and amidst rapid change.

Smart Meters

When the Victorian Government announced the Smart Meter program for improved accuracy of billing, faster connections and disconnections and real-time usage information, the Group welcomed the challenge.

The project includes the installation of 1.2 million smart meters by December 2013, that can transmit two-way data to a central repository.

AMI Network Management System

Leveraging the capabilities provided by the Quality Assurance Team, the AMI Network Management System (NMS) support team has driven testing through HP QC. HP QC is used to ensure that a third-party vendor meets Service Level Agreements (SLAs), that the AMI NMS application (Utility IQ) functions as it is supposed to, and that changes to the application do not present performance risks. HP QC allows the application owner to deliver quality solutions that meet company standards.

“With HP QC, you only have to write the test case once and you can reuse that as many times as you need. It’s efficient at tracking defects, reduces manual time, and reduces errors. We simply could not have achieved our testing schedules without it,” said Shannon Watson, NMS Analyst, System & Application.

Field Mobile Applications

Further adhering to government regulations and business drivers, the Group has deployed the Ventyx Service Suite product to enable the accurate capture of real-time information from the field through over 500 PDAs.

Adopting a thorough end-to-end testing process, the application group aligned business expectations and security issues with the application itself. Incorporating HP QC allowed the team to effectively manage over 500 test cases and improve application functionality with the third-party vendor, based on discovered SLA deficiencies.

“HP QC allows us to manage our vendors and internal customers, as we can negotiate patches and articulate the priorities. It also improves our service levels to our internal customers as they have visibility into the defects and can contribute to the priority fix list,” said Alan King, Manager, Field Mobile Applications.

The success in getting quality applications

Powercor and CitiPower have come a long way since establishing the Quality Assurance Team and rolling out HP QC capabilities across the enterprise.

“Selecting a high performing tool such as HP QC was the first step. But having a skilled group of testing and monitoring consultants behind us makes all the difference. Put simply, JDS keeps the testing technology working so that our other critical applications can continue to be highly available with minimal defects. We would not have achieved the results without them,” said Hocking.

Powercor and CitiPower will continue to draw upon JDS’s expertise in the areas of technical testing, IT monitoring, and HP Software Support for the future.

“JDS Support has provided outstanding service levels. In the past three years, 60% of all support calls have been resolved instantly, and the rest within days. I can have skilled technicians on-site quickly if I need, and can access a large pool of expertise for trouble shooting. With JDS, the Quality Assurance Team has been able to deliver on its service levels and we will continue to work together as we further enhance QA capabilities within the group,” Fiona Hocking concludes.



Case Study Summary

Vision

To profitably grow the business, as a key member of the Cheung Kong Group and Spark Infrastructure, and remain a leading infrastructure and related services business.

Strategy

Provide high performing applications that are available 24/7 with minimal level of defects.

Approach

Develop an effective Quality Assurance discipline for application lifecycles across the enterprise.

Solution

Utilise HP QC to manage test schedules across critical applications and leverage the expertise of JDS to keep HP QC running, current, utilised, and supported.

Outcome

- Improved uptake of QA processes by 78%
- Provided HP QC to application groups with zero outages
- Increased application performance quality and delivered new projects, patches, upgrades meeting corporate guidelines