

The future up close

WORLD QUALITY REPORT

15th Edition | 2023-24



JAPAN

Quality? It's a given!

In a 1993 Washington Post article titled "What Japan Taught Us About Quality", renowned quality management expert Joseph M. Juran highlighted a notable observation. In 1954, over 140 chief executives from the largest manufacturing companies in Japan attended his lectures on quality. This was distinctly different from his US audience that usually comprised of engineers and quality control managers.

This contrast underscores Japan's enduring dedication to quality even today, solidifying its global reputation for exemplary quality management and meticulous attention to detail. Quality, today, remains a painstakingly refined and closely scrutinized system in the country.

Trust is vital to quality

Customer-centricity remains at the heart of all Japanese organizations. This core principle exerts a significant influence on various aspects, including the strategic choices made when embracing novel technologies and methodologies. For instance, unlike many countries that have smoothly transitioned to Agile and DevOps as their primary working methods, numerous Japanese companies still opt for the Waterfall methodology for specific projects. It's worth noting that such decisions are deliberate and purposeful. Japan has a low tolerance for failure and places a strong emphasis on quality, even prioritizing it over time-to-market. This approach doesn't necessarily indicate a reluctance to take risks or a disinterest in adopting modern technology and methodologies. Instead, it encourages thorough rounds of research, experimentation, and validation before implementing any new approach.

The challenge lies in harmonizing their successful legacy methods with the need to remain competitive in the global market by adopting the latest practices. To do so, various major corporations with extensive international operations have adopted diverse quality management systems, tailored to the specific countries they are operating in. This approach has sparked an increasing need to adjust and standardize quality engineering practices to align with global standards.

Tech trends

The World Quality Report survey (2023) highlights that Japanese corporations prioritize customer experience and efficiency as the key benefits of 'Jidoka' or automation. This focus remains consistent with the previous year, emphasizing quality over the immediate implementation of a new tech

trend, while maintaining the practice of diligent research and experimentation. Case-in-point are low code/ no code implementations that have gained popularity over the past year. While Japan holds the second rank in conducting pilot tests for the same, it only serves as testimony to the unwavering Japanese ideology of 'test first'.

This also holds true for cloud computing, followed by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML), with open-source testing solutions trailing behind (WQR Survey, 2023). All four technologies exhibit differing degrees of adoption, with a decreasing order of implementation in relation to each other. This trend is driven by concerns regarding the quality of their solutions, which in turn stimulate ongoing research into their capabilities.

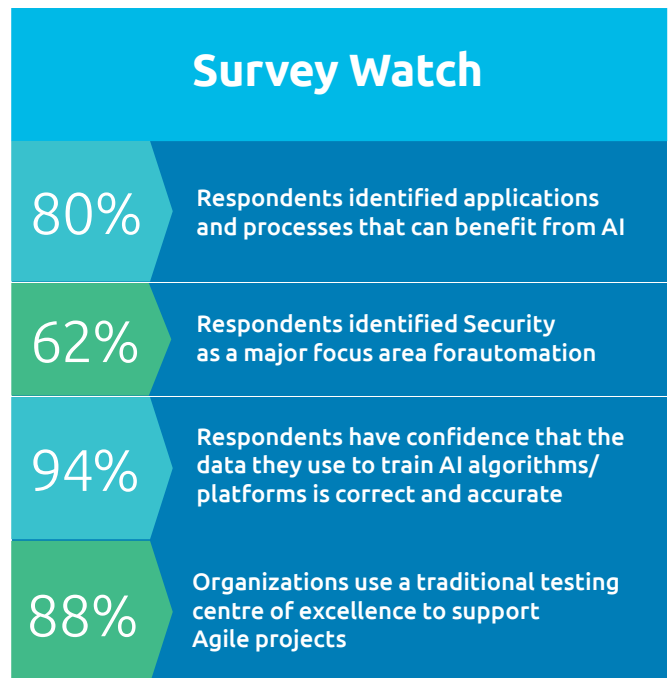
However, with recent AI advancements like Gen AI, Japan has begun setting its implementation goals. Japanese organizations are primarily focused on attaining higher productivity and greater speed as the key quality outcomes when they explore and leverage AI's potential. However, experts caution that the risks might outweigh the benefits, as many organizations believe the Japanese industry isn't fully prepared for Gen AI adoption. Nevertheless, interest in Gen AI is on the rise as regulations are taking shape and both the education sector and local startups are beginning to integrate it.

Quality: A second nature to Japan

Japan has consistently been regarded as a leader in the field of quality management for many decades. Every emerging global trend undergoes thorough rounds of research and experimentation before adoption. Even upon implementation, measures are taken to ensure minimal direct impact on business operations.

Sustainability is also becoming an integral part of the testing ecosystem and is not a passing fad. It's here to stay as a way of life and conducting business. It is regarded as one of the top Key Performance Indicators in companies, with demand for progression and refinement increasing every day.

With the latest advancements and progress being made in the QE landscape, Japan is poised to elevate its game to the next level, establishing yet again a standard for which it is revered worldwide.



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