

LEADING SATELLITE TV OPERATOR

– APPLAUSE CASE STUDY –

“YOU GET THE IMPRESSION THAT THE APPLAUSE TESTERS ARE GUNNING FOR YOU TO IMPLEMENT THEIR FEEDBACK. YOU CAN FEEL HOW MUCH THEY ENJOY HELPING US GET TO THE BOTTOM OF ISSUES THEY IDENTIFIED.”

PRODUCT OWNER

CUSTOMER

When your satellite TV covers even the most remote locations across multiple continents, ensuring a seamless experience for all users can seem overwhelming. Image quality must be high, recording functionality needs to work and information shown on electronic program guides (EPGs) has to be accurate — all across thousands of channels in multiple languages. This is especially true now that a new breed of competitor, on-demand streaming services, is raising the bar for high-quality user experiences.

To meet changing consumer expectations, one of the world's leading satellite TV operators wanted to double down on QA. Yet the company could not test its satellite receivers with APIs in the lab; it needed to test with real users in real-world scenarios. Specifically, it wanted to find testers who both represented elements of its often niche customer base and had the technical acumen to provide helpful bug descriptions and logs.

CHALLENGE

Rather than trying to directly compete with fiber, the company wanted to appeal to consumers who had a specific need for satellite TV. These were often people who lived in locations with limited terrestrial infrastructure, those with isolated vacation homes or expatriates who wanted to watch programs from their home country abroad. Each group had separate demands that brought a unique set of testing challenges for the company.

COMPANY

Anonymized

INDUSTRY

Telecommunications

TESTING TYPES

Functional testing

APP TYPES

Set-top box

CHALLENGES

- Recruit testers living in multiple countries who speak various languages
- Ensure truly global coverage by testing in the world's remotest locations
- Monitor the quality of the electronic program guide (EPG)

RESULTS

- Redesigned the EPG and key features in line with customer expectations
- Dramatically reduced the number of crashes and other functional errors
- Noticeably improved the quality of EPG content in multiple languages

For consumers living remotely, satellite is often their only option for watching TV. Above all, they want to know that the receiver works, the image is stable and they can access their favorite channels. Given the diversity of consumer locations globally, robust functional testing in real user environments is essential to ensure seamless experiences — regardless of whether consumers are in cities, in the mountains or even at sea.

Consumers with isolated vacation homes tend to have different priorities. Often used to high-quality fiber networks in their main residence, they can find the thousands of channels available on satellite TV overwhelming. Rather than endlessly flicking through channels, they want to be able to find relevant programs to watch quickly and favor satellite operators offering user-friendly EPGs.

Finally, consumers living who want to watch TV from their home country demand robust localization. This particularly applies to the EPG, which is a key source of information like program names, descriptions and schedules. To validate the quality of translated EPG content, the company needed testers living abroad in specific countries who spoke specific languages, e.g. a Persian speaker based in Germany to check content from Iran.

In addition to solving the challenges different customer groups presented, the company also wanted to gather fresh perspectives on its products. While its internal QA team was highly adept, the staff believed that over-familiarity with their products was hampering meaningful change. It needed to take testing outside of the lab.

SOLUTIONS

Since 2021, Applause's uTest community has provided the company with 265 testers from 32 countries to test its set-top box (STB). Our testing services team sources testers with very specific profiles, such as Arabic speakers living in France or fiber TV customers who rely on satellite TV in remote vacation homes. Applause vets, trains and onboards testers, in addition to distributing the satellite receivers.

Applause's testers help the company evaluate a number of scenarios. One major task is assessing the quality and accuracy of metadata provided by third parties. Given the enormous quantity of program descriptions, thumbnail images and schedules in different languages, there is high room for error. Applause testers scour the metadata for possible truncations, poor translations, distorted images, unrepresentative descriptions and inconsistencies.



Testers also check whether the STB is working properly. They routinely flick between hundreds of channels to ensure that the info banner displays the correct information and check that image quality is high. In addition, testers perform actions such as scheduling programs to record and setting program reminders to validate the STB works as it should. Testers are available outside of working hours to ensure that recording functionality works throughout the night or to monitor the EPG following new releases or updates.

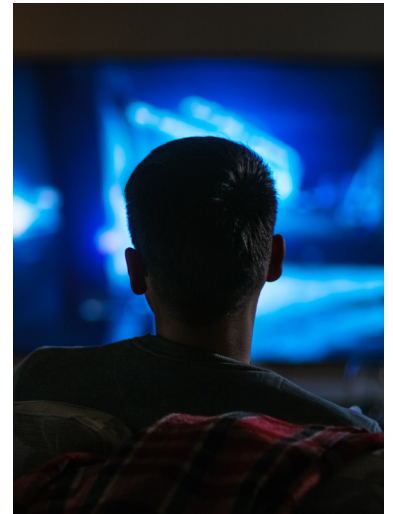
RESULTS

Applause discovered many critical bugs that prevented STB users from performing critical actions.

Recording programs is a key example. In some cases, the STB froze part of the way through recording; in others, it recorded the wrong program entirely. During one test cycle, testers discovered that the STB repeatedly failed to record programs between 5:00–5:30 A.M. and the EPG did not display programs shorter than 20 minutes.

In such scenarios, the ability to ask testers questions directly is invaluable to the company — developers appreciate how eager the Applause testers are to help clarify and rectify issues as soon as possible.

Moving forward, the company plans to work with Applause to dive deeper into UX considerations and put user perspectives firmly at the center of product development.



ABOUT APPLAUSE

Applause is a world leader in testing and digital quality. Brands win or lose customers through digital interactions, and Applause alone delivers authentic feedback on the quality of digital assets and experiences, provided by real users in real-world settings. Unlike traditional testing methods (including lab-based and offshoring), Applause responds with the speed, scale and flexibility that brands require and expect. Applause provides actionable testing results that help development teams build better digital experiences faster, and release them with confidence. The world's leading brands – including Google, American Express and Dow Jones – rely on Applause as a best practice and release partner to deliver digital experiences their customers love.

Learn more at: www.applause.com