



Communication Services

— APPLAUSE CASE STUDY —

“ WE PLAN APPLAUSE INTO OUR ROADMAP THE MOMENT WE START DEFINING A NEW PRODUCT OR FEATURE TO MAKE SURE WE LEAVE ENOUGH TIME FOR TESTING.”

MICHAEL ANDRASCHKE, QA LEAD AT S-COM

COMPANY

S-Communication Services (S-Com) develops digital services and integrated communications for the leading German financial group Sparkasse. It is responsible for ensuring consistency across all of Sparkasse's customer-facing digital platforms, as well as developing holistic digital solutions that safeguard and grow the Sparkasse group's success.

CHALLENGE

S-Com must ensure digital quality across multiple large platforms and a growing number of smaller websites and software solutions belonging to the Sparkasse group. These digital properties include the sparkasse.de website, the bank's real estate portal and several corporate websites. S-Com also oversees various pieces of content, articles and smaller software widgets in individual websites of the 350+ independent Sparkasse branches, where customers can access online banking, book in-branch appointments and read blog posts on financial topics. As each website shares slightly different content, monitoring quality and consistent branding across all platforms is a challenge.

S-Com also plays an important role in safeguarding the Sparkasse group's reputation and securing confidence from its customers. Even minor functional issues on a Sparkasse website can create concerns that run the gamut from customers questioning a bank's integrity to false speculations in

COMPANY

S-Com for Sparkasse

INDUSTRY

Finance

TEST TYPES

Functional

APPLICATIONS

Mobile | Web

CHALLENGES

- Increase test capacity to incorporate greater device, location and network coverage
- Incorporate real-user perspectives on the quality of digital products
- Safeguard the reputation and business of one of Germany's biggest banks

RESULTS

- Improved digital product quality across 365 independent branches
- Uncovered critical bugs before production rollout that would have prevented customers from moving through business-critical flows
- Increased test coverage to include devices representative of the customer base

the press about security issues. Bugs isolated to a single branch's website can also lead customers to believe that the issue is with the wider banking group in general, meaning small issues can escalate quickly to cause financial damage.

With customers accessing Sparkasse's digital experiences from all types of devices and locations, S-Com was challenged to test the various customer scenarios on real devices. Internal QA is mainly done on stationary laptops — an environment that does not reflect the dynamic experiences of all Sparkasse customers.

SOLUTION

Applause acts as a security net for S-Com's testing team, coming in as the final stage of testing before new features go into production. S-Com works in a CI/CD environment, so for incremental software updates, Applause tests in the production environment each week and provides S-Com with detailed bug reports each Monday morning. The S-Com team fixes found issues in its next sprint, and Applause testers verify these fixes to ensure that errors have been completely solved.

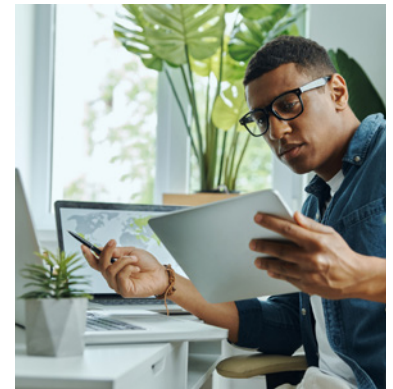
Applause testers bring the real-world perspective to S-Com's testing efforts. Testers from the 1.3 million-strong uTest community of digital experts carry out a mix of functional and exploratory tests using hundreds of device, OS and browser combinations. Applause testers look at Sparkasse's products through fresh eyes, bringing the team's attention to issues with features they had not considered due to over-familiarity with their products.

S-Com appreciates the speed and professionalism Applause brings to last-minute testing requests. When the S-Com team needs unplanned tests in a hurry, they email Applause. The Applause team sets up a meeting to go through the requirements, and the tests take place the next day. Applause testers mobilize so quickly that they often take the S-Com team by surprise, something S-Com's QA Lead, Michael Andraschek, greatly values about the collaboration.

RESULTS

At the end of each year, the S-Com team sits down and draws conclusions as to whether the number and criticality of bugs Applause found justifies its investment in testing hours. The team looks at examples of notable issues uncovered in testing and production environments as it evaluates Applause's value.

One set of products that Applause helps S-Com test is its various online calculators that customers use to work out financial scenarios, like the



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monthly installments required for a desired repayment. Calculators are of strategic business importance to Sparkasse because customers use them to decide whether or not to invest in financial products. To avoid the bank's customers giving up on calculations, Applause testers go through all potential flows on each calculator with a fine-tooth comb. In one business-critical instance, they found that changing the terms of the loan did not automatically recalculate the payment rate.

Another key business channel is its real estate platform, where customers and estate agents working for Sparkasse can buy and sell properties by filling out an online form that generates an advertisement. Through a mix of structured and exploratory testing, Applause uncovered multiple issues in the staging environment. For instance, testers were unable to go back a page on the form, meaning they had to start fresh each time they wanted to make a change. When they tried to add an image, the upload failed without any corresponding error message. When they came to preview the advert, customers found that multiple pieces of information had not been rendered, with images missing and prices and energy efficiency ratings marked as 0.

Applause also uncovered functional issues across the website that prevented customers from moving forward through key flows. Testers using tablets were unable to view the main menu in landscape mode, which left them with no way to move around the website. The toggle button that customers use to consent to additional content didn't work, which could have had consequences for upsell. In a particularly critical example, the CTA button for customers to make an appointment at the bank did not work at all.

Overall, the issues Applause uncovered might have frustrated customers and damaged Sparkasse's profit and reputation. With access to a multitude of device, OS and browser combinations, as well as expert testers with real-world, fresh perspectives through Applause, S-Com is able to deliver Sparkasse products with far greater confidence.

“APPLAUSE RESPONDS SO QUICKLY TO LAST-MINUTE REQUESTS THAT WE ARE OFTEN TAKEN BY SURPRISE AND HAVE TO SCRAMBLE TO PREPARE!”

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ABOUT APPLAUSE

Applause is the world leader in testing and digital quality. Brands today win or lose customers through digital interactions, and Applause alone can deliver authentic feedback on the quality of digital assets and experiences, provided by real users in real-world settings. Our disruptive approach harnesses the power of the Applause platform and leverages a vetted community of more than one million digital experts worldwide. Unlike traditional testing methods (including lab-based and offshoring), we respond with the speed, scale and flexibility that digital-focused brands require and expect. Applause provides insightful, actionable testing results that can directly inform go/no go release decisions, helping development teams build better and faster, and release with confidence. Thousands of digital-first brands – including Ford, Google, Western Union and Dow Jones – rely on Applause as a best practice to deliver the digital experiences their customers love.

Learn more at: www.applause.com