USER ACCEPTANCE TESTING: WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

In both large and small projects we always ask clients to carry out some User Acceptance Testing (UAT). However, we often find that people are too busy to give this stage sufficient attention or perhaps do not understand the value of it, so we just wanted to highlight a few reasons why it is so important:

- UAT is your opportunity to ensure that not only are you are getting what you expect, but also what you need (sometimes these can be different!).
- UAT is your opportunity to ensure that what was designed actually functions as required and improves your business process.
- Although Loci carry out our own unit testing before handing over to you, we may make assumptions or take different steps compared to your end users, particularly as each individual client has their own unique business processes. Therefore, we may not test in the same way you would and may not uncover the same issues.
- To assist with UAT we usually include in the Functional Requirements Document (FRD), recommendations on what you should test. Our recommendations are generally the absolute minimum that should be tested so you should always ensure that all business processes impacted by the customisation are fully tested, ideally with multiple iterations of data scenarios.
- Data is a critical part of UAT. It's important to ensure that all possible data combinations are tested. Different data combinations can often uncover issues that are not shown in other combinations. Make sure you test your most complicated scenario.
- During a system implementation or upgrade, as well as testing any customisations, UAT is your opportunity to also:
    - test new vanilla (standard out of the box) functionality – this is likely to be the first time you will be hands on with any new functionality, so it's important to ensure you fully understand how it works and how it will fit in with your business processes.
    - validate your business processes – this is an essential step that many clients miss. You may be introducing new business processes so you need to know that they make sense and do produce the outcome you are expecting – more efficiency, better quality etc. If you are not changing your fundamental processes, do they still make sense, do you need to update any process manuals/user documentation?
- Good UAT can reduce or avoid altogether any additional costs. It is always much quicker, easier and therefore cheaper to resolve issues or implement changes at the Inspect stage.

In our experience any project that has time/resources dedicated to the UAT phase, generally has a more successful outcome than those that spend no or limited time on this phase.

In our next article we will look at how you can reduce the likelihood of finding issues during UAT by focussing on the Design stage.

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