Technology – the Compliance Enabler

Year after year, surveys indicate that supporting business growth is a top priority for IT. Yet five years on from the global financial crisis that brought much of the world into recession, waves of legislation continue to hit the shores of IT, adding to an already overwhelming workload and threatening its ability to do much more than ‘keep the lights on’.

With each new month bringing yet more legislation, and the parade of data privacy horror stories never ending, it is clear there is still much to do. With this in mind, industry analyst estimates for global IT debt should come as no surprise; accumulating $500 billion of overdue maintenance in a climate of growing compliance and shrinking budgets seems not only feasible but highly likely.

Time for a Change: A New Approach to Compliance

IT leaders are growing weary of a ‘check box’ approach to compliance; it is unsustainable beneath the onslaught of regulation. Instead, they are shifting to one based more in enterprise risk management. In doing so, they aim to reduce duplication and redundancy and re-balance efforts to ensure they are in line with levels of risk and not spending “a million dollars to fix a $500 problem.”

Effective use of technology in the areas of application understanding, software development and test data management make a huge difference for IT, amplifying individual efficiency and safeguarding the business. It helps development teams to break free from the stranglehold of ‘lights on’ maintenance – to ‘find it, fix it and test it’ with confidence and speed.

Find It: Embracing Change Through Application Understanding

Used to great effect on mass change programs as far back as Y2K, application understanding technology has gone from strength to strength, forming the backbone of many organizations’ maintenance activities, including handling the change requests emerging from mandatory regulation. One such example is SEPA”, the Single Euro Payment Area, which becomes a requirement for cross-border trading on February 1st 2014. Technology helps business analysts work with developers to identify and isolate impacted sections of the application portfolio and provide a ‘single source of truth’ for all stakeholders, regardless of role or function. The positive impact on risk and productivity is not only significant, but also provides the basis for something even more powerful – application portfolio management – through which organizations can ensure the on-going health and value of their entire portfolio.
Fix It: Boosting Development Efficiency and Wiping Out the Skills Gap

Help in finding where to make code changes is clearly crucial, especially when up-to-date documentation for many of these systems is missing. Application-understanding technology provides developers with a ‘to do’ list, focusing them on impacted areas and dramatically reducing the learning curve associated with unfamiliar code. From there, having the right tools to execute the work means getting the job done quickly and accurately, avoiding re-work and high-profile system failure.

The ‘right tools’ are based on industry standards like Eclipse and Visual Studio, enabling the broadest possible pool of developers to be productive in the shortest possible time, whatever their background – COBOL or C#, mainframe or mobile. They bring huge productivity benefits through powerful editing, syntax correction and debugging features, and they present these features in a way that is immediately familiar to new arrivals – once again, reducing the learning curve.

And for mainframe development, they provide a balance between Windows-based productivity and the familiar mainframe environment, bringing out the best in all team members, while slashing mainframe usage costs, particularly in the area of testing.

Test It: Protecting Privacy Through Automated Test Data Management

A key element in de-risking IT is ensuring that applications are released and updated without the introduction of errors. This is fairly well understood in the industry. Less well understood seems to be the fact that using production data to test those applications is a very bad idea indeed.

Effective test data management, including hiding sensitive data through various forms of automated masking, satisfies privacy compliance and removes the risk of personal information falling into the wrong hands when company property is stolen or mislaid.

Compliance-savvy organisations go even further, using those same tools to reduce the size of their data sets while keeping full referential integrity. By using smaller, more precise, and secure test data sets, organizations can run their QA and testing lifecycle in a shorter time, at a higher quality and with a lower cost.
Conclusion

IT compliance can easily be perceived as the inhibitor of effective software development, limiting innovation, enforcing documentation, and ultimately dictating what developers can and can't do. Smart organizations are using compliance as an opportunity to make improvements to team productivity.

Unless organizations change their approach it will remain impossible for IT departments to service the needs of the compliance office and still satisfy the CIO’s innovation agenda. By introducing appropriate technology, companies can get ahead of the game – not just of compliance, but of their entire ‘lights on’ burden, seeing compliance as a force for good in changing the way things are done. Only then will the CIO finally be able to generate the business growth the company needs and which everyone knows only IT can deliver.

Learn more:

Bridging the knowledge gap, White paper (2013)

A step change in development efficiency, White paper (2013)

References

i  http://blog.microfocus.com/compliance/the-lights-are-on-but-no-ones-home/2409/

ii  'Which Regulations Apply to Compliance Managers Now?', Gartner, 22 March 2013, French Caldwell


iv  See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single_Euro_Payments_Area