

Quality assured

A stalwart supplier to the testing industry with global coverage, Seapine Software promises to help its customers reduce complexity allowing them to focus on their core business, producing quality software. *T.E.S.T* magazine spoke to company founder Rick Riccetti.



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After fourteen years in the business of supplying solutions and training to software testers, Cincinnati, Ohio-based Seapine Software can lay claim to being one of the pioneers in this sector. The company specialises in helping companies identify the problems they have developing quality products and implementing cost-effective solutions to those challenges. These solutions can come in the forms of consulting or tools, or a combination of both.

T.E.S.T.: What are the origins of the company; how did it start and develop; how has it grown and how is it structured?

Rick Riccetti: Seapine Software Inc is a privately held corporation headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio in the USA. My wife, Kelly, and I founded Seapine in 1995, and operated the company out of our home for the first three years. Seapine's mission at the time was to reduce the complexity of software development tools, allowing developers and quality assurance

professionals more time to focus on their task at hand—producing quality software. That remains Seapine's mission today.

Seapine's first product was TestTrack for the Apple Macintosh platform, which was introduced in 1996. We followed this with a Windows version in 1997 and a web browser version in 1998. From there we moved to an office and began to grow the company.

In 2002, we began to expand our product portfolio by developing and releasing Surround SCM, a software change management tool, and acquiring QA Wizard, an automated testing tool. In 2006, we released TestTrack TCM, a test case management tool developed internally. In 2007, we released QA Wizard Pro, a more robust functional and regression testing tool than the original QA Wizard.

Seapine has grown from two employees to over 100, and has added offices in London, Munich, and Melbourne. With all of this growth, the company has remained faithful to its

internal culture and a philosophy of exceeding customer expectations.

T.E.S.T: What range of products and services does the company offer?

RR: As an application lifecycle management (ALM) solution provider, Seapine offers many tools to support the application development lifecycle. Specifically, we offer QA Wizard Pro for automated functional and regression testing, Surround SCM for software change management, TestTrack Pro for issue and development process management, and TestTrack TCM for test case planning and management. We also offer multiple levels of training for all products, custom software development, data conversion, and process consulting services.

Integration is a key feature of our products. TestTrack Pro and Surround SCM support linking issues and change requests with source code changes for improved traceability of software changes. QA Wizard Pro integrates with TestTrack Pro to automate pushing test failures into users' defect tracking workflow. QA Wizard Pro also integrates with TestTrack TCM so users can link test scripts with TestTrack TCM tests cases and automate running tests. TestTrack Pro and TestTrack TCM are integrated in a single application so defects can be traced to the test that generated them. Defects can also be promoted to new test cases to help improve test coverage.

Surround SCM and the TestTrack products are cross-platform client/server applications, running on Windows, Mac OS X, Linux, and Solaris. All products support industry-standard databases for data storage. We have also embraced open standards where possible to make it easier for customers and our services team to extend our products.

Seapine helps quality assurance organisations create, enforce, automate, track, and measure QA processes. Beginning with TestTrack TCM, we give companies a specialised tool to help them manage the thousands of test cases needed to test today's complex applications.

Finally, we offer the Quality-Ready Assessment (QRA). This online assessment helps companies measure their product development capabilities in the four keys areas of testing, change control, tracking, and automation. After completing the assessment, the survey results and recommendations for improving any noted deficiencies are emailed to the respondent within a few minutes.

T.E.S.T: Does the company have any specialisations within the software testing industry?

RR: We specialise in helping companies identify their deficiencies as they relate to developing quality products and implement cost-effective solutions to address those deficiencies. These solutions can come in the forms of consulting or tools, or a combination of both.

More specifically, Seapine helps quality assurance organisations create, enforce, automate, track, and measure QA processes. Beginning with

TestTrack TCM, we give companies a specialised tool to help them manage the thousands of test cases needed to test today's complex applications. With TestTrack Pro, companies have a solution for managing issues found during software testing to ensure they are resolved or at least considered in future builds. QA Wizard Pro is a platform for automating functional and regression testing and we can bring expertise to companies to help them implement a formal automated testing programme.

T.E.S.T: Who are the company's main customers today and in the future?

RR: Financial services, health care, computer/console gaming, aerospace/defence, and government customers produce software that is held to a very high standard. Specific needs of these customers include compliance auditing, traceability, transparency, risk management, and addressing the challenges of geographically distributed teams. The feature sets of our solutions directly address the needs of these customers, and by extension, customers in less quality-demanding industries. For example, TestTrack Pro has features that help companies automate workflows, enforce processes, and produce detailed audit trails for compliance audits. The cross-platform client/server architecture uses encrypted data communications to provide secure connectivity between geographically dispersed teams.

To measure whether Seapine and a prospective customer are a good fit, we ask how important quality is to the organisation. If quality is critical or management-driven, then we are a great fit for the organisation. However, if quality is not that important to the prospect, then it is difficult to sell them on the virtues of process

control, traceability, change control, etc. Fortunately, more companies are becoming aware of the impact of quality on development cost and delivery time, and the link between quality and customer satisfaction, which drives future sales.

T.E.S.T: What is your view of the current state of the testing industry and how will the recent global economic turbulence affect it? What are the challenges and the opportunities?

RR: The testing industry (or at least the demand for testing tools) remains strong; however, the vendor choices are a little less clear for companies than in the past. Prior market leaders of QA tools have been absorbed into larger companies and some products have either been deprecated or have taken a less prominent role in the acquiring companies' portfolios. That creates an opportunity for companies like Seapine that remain independent and focused exclusively on the quality problems of our customers.

Economically turbulent times are a wakeup call for companies to improve efficiencies across the organisation. For software development companies and IT teams, test automation can have the biggest impact in helping companies accomplish more with their QA resources. So there is a real opportunity to introduce automated testing to companies. However, these tools have a higher cost-per-seat than many other tools and cash flow is being watched closely. The challenge (and opportunity) is to demonstrate to companies how quickly a ROI can be realised on the automated testing investment.

T.E.S.T: What are the future plans for the business?

RR: We plan to keep the focus on helping companies deliver quality software products, while reducing costs. Providing integrated, cost-effective products and services will remain our competitive advantage. We will continue to expand the capabilities of our ALM solution by adding innovative tools to our product line while providing complementary services that help companies improve their processes as well as get the most out of their software tool investment.

By opening additional offices within and outside of North America, we will continue to expand our ability to provide the best possible purchasing,

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support, and services experience regardless of a customer's location. Maintaining high customer satisfaction rates will continue to dominate our culture.

Finally, we will continue to expand the number of development tools that our tools integrate with and provide a rich set of open interfaces into our products and data stores.

T.E.S.T: How do you see the future of the software testing sector developing in the medium and longer terms?

RR: We expect to see more integration between tools, better support for developer testing, improvements in test planning tools, and new tools to help report on quality assurance.

More integration between tools will improve testing efficiency by moving data automatically between QA and development. QA tools will also be better integrated into integrated development environments, making them more accessible to developers.

Development environments will likely include unit testing tools as a standard offering. Security testing as a part of both unit testing and system testing will become standard for the developer as well.

Test planning tools are relatively new and will become more adept at creating test cases from requirements,

capturing and managing automation scripts, and helping QA teams schedule and deploy resources, both people and software, more efficiently than ever. Techniques that improve test efficiency, such as all-pairs testing, will become standard features of these tools.

Finally, dashboard-like products will become more commonplace in QA, pulling from multiple data sources to provide the QA manager and senior managers with instant visibility into the state of the testing effort.

T.E.S.T: Is there anything else you would like to add?

RR: The opportunity to help companies deliver better products to their customers is what drives our organisation. The feedback we get from our customers says we are materially impacting their ability to deliver quality products more efficiently. We know there are many, many more opportunities to help our customers with the software development and quality assurance challenges they face, and so our journey as a company is always closer to the beginning than the end.

T.E.S.T: Thank you very much.

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