Macro Scheduler User Podcast Interview: Gale Dyvig from Seattle Children's Hospital

Interview by Tracy Fitzpatrick

FITZPATRICK: Hi there. Tracy Fitzpatrick here, interviewing Macro Scheduler user Gale Dyvig from Seattle Children's Hospital. Thank you for joining us, Gale.

DYVIG: Hi Tracy.

FITZPATRICK: So, Gale we've talked before and I think one of the more interesting things about your story is that you're really familiar with the testing tools that are on the market, and you've essentially replaced those testing tools with the Macro Scheduler, right?

DYVIG: Yes, that's right. We used to use WinRunner, from HP (used to be Mercury). It was an object-oriented tool that required the application to know the objects on the screen. But we've been converting our testing to a Citrix client, which means none of those objects were viewable.

FITZPATRICK: And so it made the testing virtually impossible.

DYVIG: Yeah. It meant that we had to use WinRunner's image capabilities, which weren't as advanced as Macro Scheduler's. It required that you know, where, say a particular button is on the screen that would tell you, yeah; this is what it looks like. So basically what it meant was our scripts had to have a lot of workarounds to locate the objects that it was dealing with. And these objects would move around the screen from release to release or if a different user opened up the application, say they had a different user role, maybe it was a physician instead of a nurse, the things that we were interested in were on the screen, but they were in different places. So that was ruining the scripts, making them very difficult to maintain.

FITZPATRICK: Ok. And so can you tell me a little more about how you're using the Macro Scheduler now?

DYVIG: Yes. We're using it for our, what we call our smoke test, so whenever we receive updates on one of our clinical or ERP applications, or if we get an update from the vendor himself, then we run what we call a smoke test. Which tests the basic functionality of the system and produces a pass/fail result test report for the different functions of the test.

FITZPATRICK: Ok. And so what has the result been for you then, by using the Macro Scheduler versus WinRunner, as we previously discussed?

DYVIG: Well the main difference is that our scripts run more reliably. So, like I was mentioning before, the objects on the screen that would move around… that would break the script. So here we come up with a new release, run our script, it fails – but for a very interesting reason. The application didn't really fail. It just looked a little different. So now when we run the script, it is able to navigate through the application, and it's more likely if it finds an error to be a true error, and not just a scripting issue.

FITZPATRICK: Ok. And how has it helped you, maybe, as far as reducing cost on tools? Because I know Macro Scheduler is less expensive than WinRunner, correct?

DYVIG: Yes, it costs a fraction of the amount of WinRunner, and it also costs a fraction of other competing test tools that are out there on the market. And it saves money in other ways as well. The other test tools generally require that you have a license for every machine that you run your test on. With Macro Scheduler you can create what are called compiled-macros. So you can, say… say you have a team of five testers, and they are developing scripts on their five licenses. But we want to run tests very quickly on 20 machines. Well, then you could put compiled-macros on those 20 machines, run the test very quickly, but at no additional cost. You'd be only paying for the five licenses.

FITZPATRICK: Ok. And so the effort seems a little bit less, too, when you're scaling it across more machines?

DYVIG: Yes.

FITZPATRICK: About how many people do you have working in the testing of your software?

DYVIG: Well in our department alone, we have six. We have four of us who do automated testing, plus a couple who are manual testers. Then we also have project teams that are not creating software, but finding new ways of deploying software. And they have to test their work. So they are also doing testing. So we may be, at some point, extending the tool to them, or doing testing on their behalf.

FITZPATRICK: So, your department of six… do most or all of your group use Macro Scheduler now?

DYVIG: We are now ramping up on it. So we have trained our automation testers on using it, and they have started converting our WinRunner scripts to that format. And another thing that's interesting is that we have been required to put all of our applications to what's called a Citrix portal, which means, like I was mentioning before, our test tools can't see objects, you can't use web commands, and so on. And some of our tests, for example, our ERP test, were written using the web commands and since we can't do that anymore, we're rewriting it in the Macro Scheduler and so we'll still be able to run the tests in the environment that more closely matches what our end-users will be experiencing.

FITZPATRICK: Wow. That's excellent. Well, it seems very helpful to you.

DYVIG: Yes. We believe it's going to greatly decrease our maintenance cost, because of the fact that it's going to simplify our scripts, we are going to have fewer workarounds, and because we're able to use the same method for writing all our scripts, whether it's a web app or client server, regardless of what controls it's using, we can use the same method. We use the image recognition method. By using one method, which also means we can start including more testers. We're planning on getting our manual testers involved in creating some of their own automation.

FITZPATRICK: Wow. That's really nice that you've been able to use it. And you mentioned before that you are still working on building your library.

DYVIG: Yes.

FITZPATRICK: And getting yourself up and running so that you can extend it.

DYVIG: Yes. One of the problems we were having before, like I mentioned, with the script maintenance problem, trying to run scripts against several types of environments, where the applications weren't really compatible with the tools. The maintenance costs were killing us. We weren't able to grow the library and so we weren't able to take the load off the manual testers like we were wanting to do. Our hope is now, with Macro Scheduler, we'll be able to start moving forward on that.

FITZPATRICK: Right. Well, that's good! Well, thank you very much for your time, Gale.

DYVIG: You're welcome.

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