test IO

Case Study: Codecademy
QA Testing for Code Geniuses

codecademy

Company size: 71

Company location: Soho, NYC

Testing type: Functional, Accessibility/Usability, Content Testing

App type: Web

www.codecademy.com

GARETH PRICE, ENGINEERING MANAGER

Gareth joined Codecademy as an Engineering Manager and manages two of the engineering teams. He initially led the Growth team and later took on the Learner Experience team. His team moves quickly, dealing with daily changes, so he must trust his engineers with plenty of autonomy. This shared accountability has established a strong culture of quality.

BEFORE TEST IO

What was the problem you were having before you discovered test IO?

"We have 65 million users on our platform. *Anything pushed live has immediate and very visible outcomes to a nontrivial number of people.* When we released a feature to allow users to extend their account plans automatically, we had hundreds of people using it right away despite it being hidden deep in the account screen. When you are the person or team building a feature, it's difficult to step back and view your product with fresh eyes. You're preconditioned to follow along the track you're familiar with. Your team shouldn't have the only sets of eyes used to preview a new release. Especially, for example, if you're used to doing QA with a written plan focusing on acceptance criteria. The crowdsourcing approach was tricky to understand at first, but once we had it better explained to us and tried it out, the experience made a lot of sense. It provides a holistic view of the product that is hard to maintain when you're the person that built it. This shift in perspective allows us to find all of the permutations that are hard to catch using a traditional QA process."
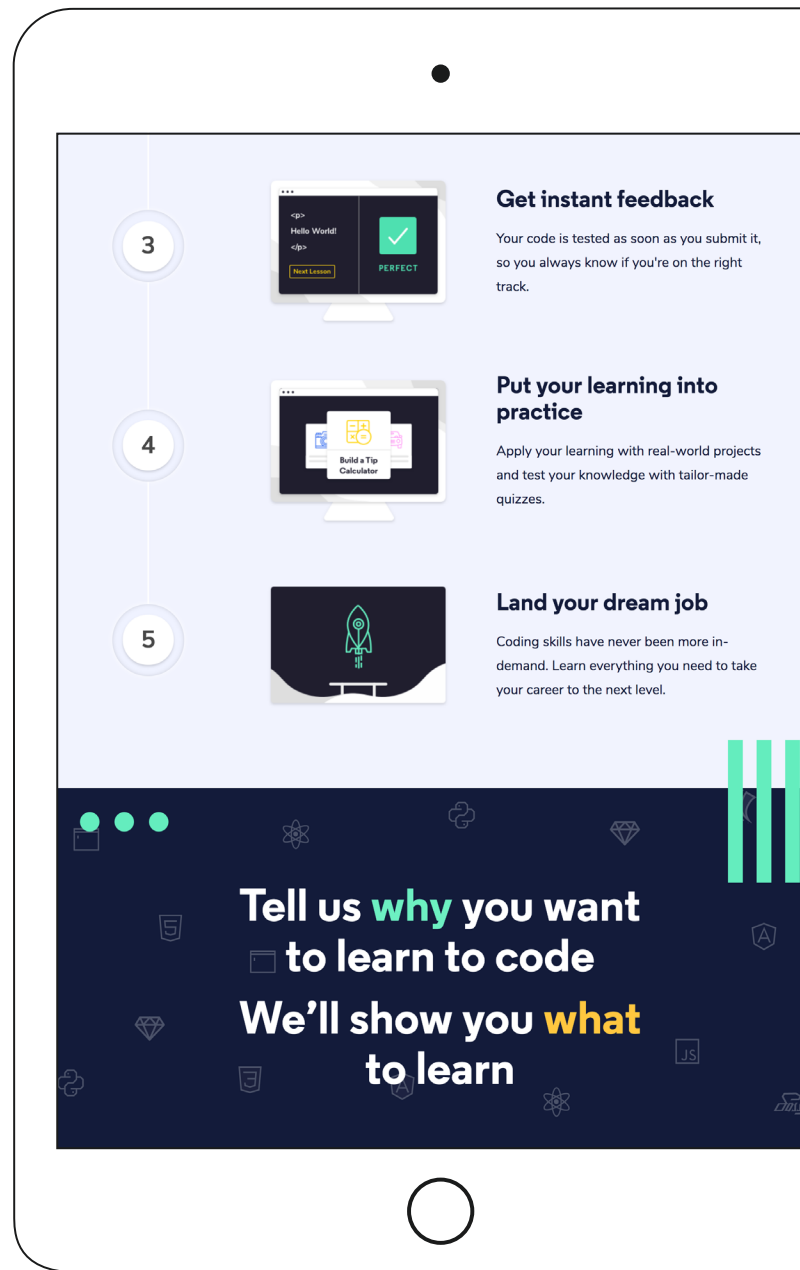
What did the frustration feel like as you tried to solve that problem?

"Intense. QA is tough. It's something I have struggled with in the past. A lot of engineers have a tough time with QA because a lot of your work goes unseen. If you do your job right, no one says anything. But it's really frustrating when you spend hundreds of hours building something and then show it to your customer only for them to find an issue with it. Being able to run through builds with a fresh head to catch mistakes before we share new releases with our customers helps strengthen our confidence in our product. Don't forget manual cross-browser testing, which is cumbersome, slow, and painful; it's really great to have the Crowd doing that with us now. I don't have to spend a whole day at the end of the project clicking through something on a myriad of device-browser combinations."

What was different about test IO (vis-a-vis competitors or existing tools and strategies used in the past)?

"In the past, I've used outsourced QA services that tend to be more of a traditional extension of your QA team, where you simply send over the test plan to be executed. The outsourced teams would run through the plan and share their reports, but that's it. test IO was different; it's much more agile and iterative. We can submit a simple description of what we want tested and have testers themselves take more initiative. I don't know how you train your testers, but it's exciting to watch them work! It's also a huge plus to submit a test in a few paragraphs of plain English instead of a large formal test plan. Building trust was initially a leap of faith, but we pushed through and feel strongly about it now. We know that a crowd of testers can cover permutations of things that would take a long time for us to cover in-house.

test IO is very 'engineer driven,' meaning that our engineers can use test IO iteratively as they need to throughout the development process and don't have to wait for a project to be completed (as in Waterfall methodology) before sending the testers in. This gives them more control over their own testing needs and is less of an engineering burden. We don't have in-house QA, so making sure engineers don't have to spend time running test plans and testing each other's work is a big plus."

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THE SWITCH

Take me to the moment when you realized test IO was working to solve your QA issues.

"Initially, we ran a test with test IO and didn't receive a lot of feedback. But then we matched our in-house findings with what test IO found, and test IO found more than what we found in-house. Now, we've set up a repeated test where our checkout flow (entailing, for example, the way taxes are calculated in different countries) gets run through every week. This was a big moment for us, as we found a way to consistently quality check our core flow without having to plan for it in our own engineering time."

LIFE TODAY

Tell me what life looks like now that you're using test IO.

"Personally, I'm less stressed and have more time for other efforts. Our engineering teams are more effective — they are also less stressed about QA and can focus on creating new things and building the best product possible for our users, spending more of their time on building out new ideas rather than on testing. Up until recently, 20-30% of our engineers' time had been spent on QA. In particular, the diminishing returns of QA don't eat up as much of our time (especially when it comes to device-browser combination testing). Now, we have much broader coverage, especially continuous coverage to identify bugs before users catch them. Overall, we're able to control our schedules better with greater developer and user satisfaction."

About Test IO

test IO helps software teams ship high-quality software faster. As a global leader in software crowdtesting, we speed up agile software development teams with a platform for on-demand QA testing throughout the entire development cycle. Test setup takes just minutes, and we dynamically allocate human testers under real-world conditions to fit your specific testing needs. No more QA bottlenecks at the end of your sprints.

Our community of thousands of professional QA testers ensures on-demand availability when you need testing and guarantees coverage across all the devices, operating systems, regions, and languages that matter to you. Test results can be delivered in as little as an hour within the development tools you already have in place.

Founded in Berlin in 2011, test IO is headquartered in San Francisco and is the trusted testing partner of leading companies such as Edmunds, Revolve, and 1800Contacts.

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