2025

Digital Quality Frameworks

Key capabilities and practices for organizations on the journey to exceptional digital experiences

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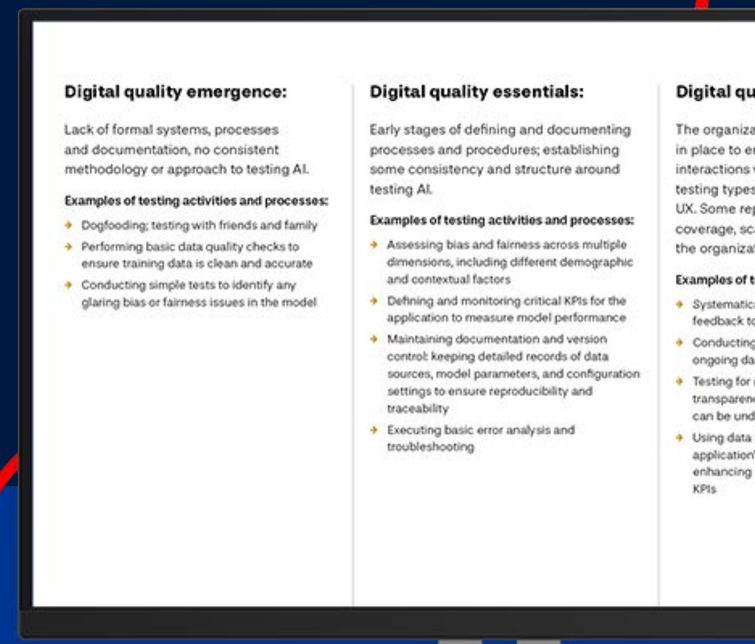

For nearly two decades, Applause has supported technology innovators and global enterprises on a mission to deliver seamless digital experiences to their customers. During that time, technology and testing have evolved – and so have we. Today, we're more than just a testing services provider. Many of our global clients rely on us to help guide their strategies for testing, UX research, inclusive design, and a host of other aspects of digital quality.

We've assembled these frameworks as a tool for organizations looking to improve their core capabilities in different areas that influence digital quality and user experiences. Think of them as a reference point to help you benchmark your current state across various quality considerations and map out a plan for improvement. Whether you're looking for the foundations of functional testing or working on a world-class UX research and inclusive design initiative, we can help identify the capabilities, practices and processes you need at each stage of growth.

Functional testing framework

Digital quality emergence:

Lack of consistent systems, processes and documentation — while individuals may have their own methods and documentation, the organization has no consistent methodology or approach to quality.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Dogfooding
- Conducting reactive testing after development
- Running tests without documenting test cases or test run results; or documenting poorly – defects may not be reproducible based on bug reports
- Running test cases inconsistently
- Skipping test case documentation or writing test cases in ways that make them difficult to follow or reproduce
- Practicing some exploratory testing
- Using disparate environments for development, testing and production

Digital quality essentials:

Early stages of defining and documenting processes and procedures; establishing some consistency and structure around test efforts. Teams may have their own unique processes, but efforts may still be siloed.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Documenting test cases for feature-based tests
- Ensuring test cases are written clearly
- Defining a device coverage matrix
- Maintaining a known issues/bug backlog list
- Testing releases pre-production
- Conducting unit, smoke and regression testing for major app components or workflows
- Performing exploratory testing for new features/app changes
- Recording test run results
- Automating frequently executed/rarely changed tests

Digital quality expansion:

Clear processes and a broad range of testing types in place. Some reporting is in place. Focus is on coverage, scalability and efficiency across the organization.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Maintaining a defined device coverage matrix based on data about website/app usage
- Conducting regression testing for all workflows
- Testing user acceptance and UX for new features/app changes
- Leveraging test automation for repetitive tests; reviewing and updating automation scripts regularly
- Documenting test cases/suites for all features
- Measuring quality KPIs with data and reporting

Digital quality excellence:

Quality is embedded in the company's DNA and built into all products and experiences from end to end.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Testing throughout the SDLC, in-sprint and in staging/pre-production
- Incorporating the voice of the customer into product design and development
- Delivering exceptional UX across all touchpoints
- Maintaining a strong test case management process
- Automating all repetitive tests that humans can't do better
- Reviewing and refining testing processes regularly
- Proactively balancing testing across manual functional, exploratory and automated testing; documenting when to use each test type
- Exploring new testing processes to maintain high levels of quality, efficiency and coverage
- Driving innovation throughout the SDLC
- Using reports to analyze trends and identify areas for improvement

Accessibility framework

Digital quality emergence:

Limited understanding of applicable laws and regulatory requirements. Lack of formal systems, processes and documentation, no consistent methodology or approach to accessibility or inclusivity.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Identifying some accessibility issues; resolving or remediating high-priority A11y issues that are identified
- Assessing conformance to WCAG and/or locally applicable regulations once or infrequently
- Emphasizing risk mitigation; making changes in response to customer complaints or threats of legal action
- Relying solely on automated tools

Digital quality essentials:

Early stages of defining and documenting processes and procedures; establishing some consistency and structure around accessibility.

Examples of testing activities, resources and processes:

- Designating an owner of the accessibility program and identifying organizational champions
- Performing periodic assessments and automated checks to ensure conformance to WCAG and compliance with locally applicable regulations
- Offering training on accessibility best practices and inclusive design
- Providing developers and/or product owners access to people with disabilities (PWD) for initial product feedback
- Conducting design reviews and in-sprint testing to identify problems earlier in the SDLC
- Engaging PWD to perform usability tests and provide feedback

Digital quality expansion:

The organization has a clear process for ensuring that accessibility is in place and uses various testing types. Some reporting is in place. Focus on coverage, scalability and efficiency across the organization.

Examples of testing activities, resources and processes:

- Documenting best practices and checking them during development
- Maintaining a knowledge base and offering training on best practices
- Holding empathy-based design and development workshops with PWD
- Incorporating input from PWD into the design & development process; benchmarking to understand the validity of customer criticisms around accessibility and usability
- Prioritizing accessibility and inclusivity in the organization's design/UI kit
- Providing attestation (VPATS)

Digital quality excellence:

The organization prioritizes inclusivity at all levels; testing and feedback from PWD occur throughout the SDLC.

Examples of testing activities, inclusive design resources and processes:

- Creating a Center of Excellence with guidance on design and development of best practices
- Requiring ongoing, mandatory training on accessibility and inclusive design best practices
- Following inclusive hiring practices to develop a diverse workforce
- Going beyond attestation to demonstrate thought leadership in inclusive design and product development
- Incorporating accessibility into the company's contracting and procurement process
- Using analytics to drive priorities and continuous improvement

UX research framework

Digital quality emergence:

Lack of formal systems, processes and documentation, no consistent methodology or approach to UX testing.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Testing with friends and family
- Guerilla usability testing
- Reading customer reviews
- Collecting user feedback (e.g., intercept surveys, etc.), without analyzing or synthesizing the data

Digital quality essentials:

Early stages of defining and documenting processes and procedures; establishing some consistency and structure around UX testing.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Regularly reviewing data from intercept surveys or similar sources
- Conducting annual heuristic (expert) evaluations
- Identifying 1–2 key user groups based off of initial trends noticed in data
- Conducting user research without a clearly established plan to act upon the findings
- Conducting 1–2 light usability evaluations each year

Digital quality expansion:

The organization has a clear process in place to assess the most common customer journeys, including digital, physical and hybrid interactions. Some reporting is in place. Focus on coverage, scalability and efficiency across the organization.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Gathering data in a variety of ways to create user personas and archetypes
- Regularly conducting a variety of UX studies at various points in the development lifecycle
- Conducting iterative usability testing to ensure any changes lead to stronger user experience
- Establishing strong relationships with key stakeholders to take action on UX study findings

Digital quality excellence:

The organization thoroughly tests all customer journeys. Detailed reporting is in place. Teams relentlessly seek out and eliminate friction and understand the variations in preferences across markets.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Regularly using personas throughout the design process
- Conducting generative research before creating products or designs
- Conducting iterative testing across all platforms, devices and designs
- Employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to uncover what is happening, why is it happening, and how the design should be improved
- Building tight partnerships across the product, design, development and research teams

Localization testing framework

Digital quality emergence:

Lack of formal systems, processes and documentation; no consistent methodology or approach to translation or localization.

Examples of testing and processes:

- Translating some high-priority content without validating that translations are contextually correct

Digital quality essentials:

Early stages of defining and documenting processes and procedures; establishing some consistency and structure around localization.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Ensuring all content that should be localized is accurately translated
- Verifying that all currencies, dates, symbols and measurements are converted to the appropriate units and formats
- Validating that forms work correctly
- Localizing content for the business's top markets

Digital quality expansion:

The organization has a clear process for ensuring accurate localization and uses various testing types to validate. Some reporting is in place. Focus on coverage, scalability and efficiency.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Using native speakers in market to validate translations and idioms
- Ensuring that visual elements fit translations
- Validating that imagery and colors are culturally appropriate
- Assessing workflows to ensure they align with expected processes
- Putting a process in place to resolve conflicts and update assets
- Conducting pre-production validation for strings
- Documenting preferred translations for key words and phrases in a glossary
- Using a minimum of double-blind support to validate translations, not including the content creator
- Localizing applications for all markets where the business operates

Digital quality excellence:

Awareness of cultural differences and commitment to respecting the norms in different markets serves as a competitive differentiator.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Leveraging cultural values and norms to create relevant product features and offerings
- Differentiating between distinct dialects, such as Portuguese vs. Brazilian Portuguese
- Providing a channel for customers to report any issues
- Having a process to manage issues
- Assessing how customer journeys vary across markets
- Factoring in accessibility concerns, such as whether screen readers work for right-to-left languages
- Demonstrating geopolitical awareness in sensitive areas; correcting errors that can damage earnings or reputation
- Committing to localization in native languages; factoring in regional dialects and differences to develop a solution that works for all stakeholders

Payment testing framework

Digital quality emergence:

Lack of formal systems, processes and documentation, no consistent methodology or approach to payment testing.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Testing with dummy cards and accounts
- Dogfooding; testing with friends and family

Digital quality essentials:

Early stages of defining and documenting processes and procedures; establishing some consistency and structure around payment testing.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Validating that transactions work using live payment instruments: testing both purchases and returns
- Defining a payment instrument coverage matrix, including at least the 5–10 most popular payment instruments in market
- Testing when changing payment gateways; validating code for new gateways or payment processors
- Verifying code for launches in new countries

Digital quality expansion:

The organization has a clear process in place to ensure the full range of payment activities work properly and uses various testing types to assess functionality and UX. Some reporting is in place. Focus on coverage, scalability and efficiency across the organization.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Creating a payment instrument coverage matrix based on data about website/app usage, local user preferences
- Validating new payment methods prior to launch
- Collecting and acting on UX feedback
- Conducting payment instrument regression testing for all features, including product returns and customer service interactions
- Testing payments using specific devices, banks and BIN combinations
- Sharing card statements upon request

Digital quality excellence:

The organization continuously and comprehensively tests end-to-end payment workflows and UX, including a wide variety of payment instruments, and understands the variations in preferred payment instruments and workflows across markets.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Conducting ongoing testing for loyalty programs, promotional offers, and options like BNPL
- Testing negative/unavailable payment instruments (soft or hard decline, blocked, expired)
- Performing wallet cycling testing with multiple payments in different balance states
- Live testing one-of-a-kind payments which require holder presence (PIX, Blink, Bancontact, iDEAL)
- Verifying purchase states live directly with the bank for card issuers, card networks and fintechs
- Verifying purchase results live directly with the bank for merchants

AI testing framework

Digital quality emergence:

Lack of formal systems, processes and documentation, no consistent methodology or approach to testing AI.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Dogfooding; testing with friends and family
- Performing basic data quality checks to ensure training data is clean and accurate
- Conducting simple tests to identify any glaring bias or fairness issues in the model

Digital quality essentials:

Early stages of defining and documenting processes and procedures; establishing some consistency and structure around testing AI.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Assessing bias and fairness across multiple dimensions, including different demographic and contextual factors
- Defining and monitoring critical KPIs for the application to measure model performance
- Maintaining documentation and version control: keeping detailed records of data sources, model parameters, and configuration settings to ensure reproducibility and traceability
- Executing basic error analysis and troubleshooting

Digital quality expansion:

The organization has a clear process in place to ensure the full range of AI interactions work properly and uses various testing types to assess functionality and UX. Some reporting is in place. Focus on coverage, scalability and efficiency across the organization.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Systematically collecting and acting on UX feedback to improve the user experience
- Conducting regular data validation to ensure ongoing data integrity and quality
- Testing for model explainability and transparency to ensure the model's decisions can be understood and justified
- Using data from KPIs to improve the application's performance over time, iteratively enhancing accuracy and efficiency based on KPIs

Digital quality excellence:

The organization thoroughly tests end-to-end workflows and UX for AI experiences, including a wide variety of inputs and prompts, and understands the variations in preferences across markets.

Examples of testing activities and processes:

- Conducting comprehensive end-to-end testing from data ingestion to final output to ensure consistency and accuracy
- Performing advanced, ongoing red teaming exercises to proactively identify and mitigate vulnerabilities
- Ensuring rigorous, comprehensive data validation to maintain high standards of quality and reliability, including regular audits and compliance checks
- Maintaining extensive testing documentation and sharing knowledge and learnings internally
- Continuing to retrain models over time, updating them using live data
- Executing real-time monitoring to detect and correct anomalies as they arise

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