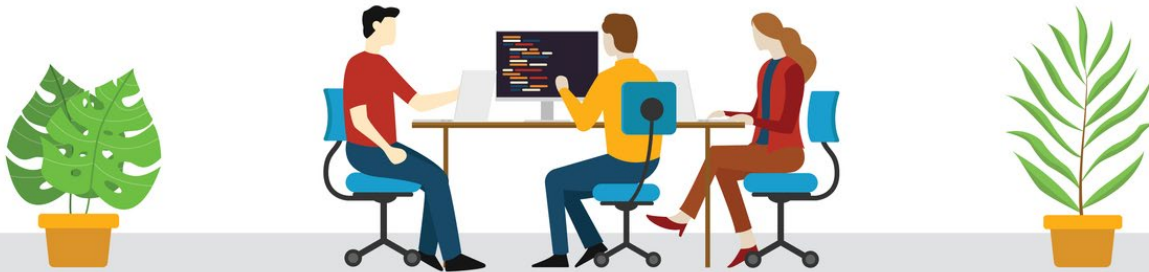
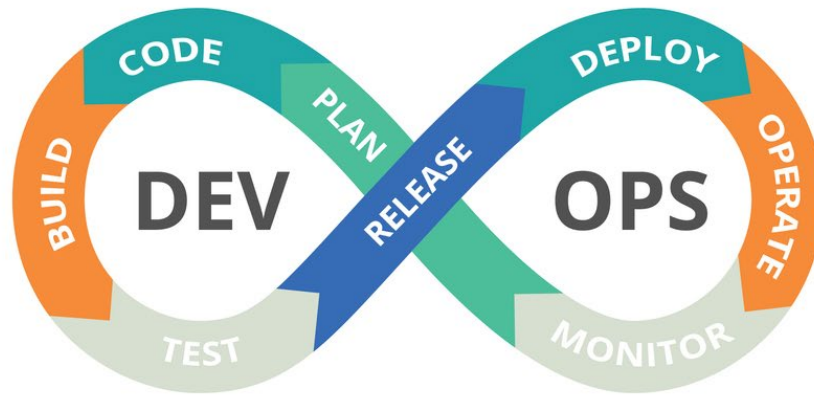


# | Case Study

## Vistatec Fully Integrates with Enterprise Software Client's Product Development Team



### | Situation

#### Product Sector

This client is a global company well-known for excellence in engineering services and meeting rigorous standards of customer satisfaction. They produce an enterprise-level software suite for managing the access and identities of employees, conference attendees, and customers at scale. This product suite supports both physical and virtual sign-in/sign-out processes and provides real-time administration and status. Hosted in the cloud, the software has rigid uptime requirements.

## **Their Customers**

The client's B2B product suite is primarily sold to other businesses, most of which are large enterprises. While the overall customer base is not large per se, the number of end users who need to be efficiently managed by each customer can be substantial (upwards of 50,000) and widely geographically dispersed. Among the client's customers are large corporations with physical real estate requirements such as entering and exiting properties, large international theme parks and US government facilities, to name a few.

## **Development and Installation Details**

Major updates to the client's flagship product suite release roughly once a year, with smaller point releases and patches in between. The product itself is complex; there are thousands of installation files, each of which can contain hundreds of thousands of words of localizable content. It runs on multiple platforms and several different operating systems, so there are at least four different ways to install it. The software suite is so intricate that the client must dispatch a consultant to perform installation work on-site for each customer.

From an internationalization perspective, the product is further complicated by the different levels of localization provided with each release. There are a mix of five to thirteen modules (or components), with different tiers of localization: full, partial, and minimal. This language mix can even fluctuate from one annual release to another. All these variables must be factored in when creating a test matrix for each release.

## **International Approach**

Like many companies, this client started out doing localization in-house many years ago. As senior management continued to focus on streamlining operations and reducing costs, however, they eventually outsourced localization and other related functions, most notably their international testing processes. In doing so, they needed to bring their vendors up to speed on engineering complexities and then ultimately run with those who showed the most promise. Vistatec had been their provider from early on and now had the chance to demonstrate their skills again with this new challenge.



## | Task

### Testing

The client recognized that product complexity was quickly becoming the single biggest challenge to releasing on time at the required quality level. Supporting multiple platforms, operating systems, and the varied language mix exponentially amplified the scope of their testing requirements for each subsequent release. Yet there was no way to scale back the necessity of uncompromising continuous uptime; as a B2B product, their customer base was insistent on solid quality. Furthermore, the need to simultaneously ship (“sim-ship”) all language versions on the same day created additional testing and scheduling burdens.

*“Installs and setups are the time-consuming part. In our earlier test passes, we’d have a matrix of 150 or 160 installs that had to be done quickly. Builds are generated quickly to regress and close bugs, and you have to keep up with them.”*

Up until this point, the client had been working with Vistatec to surmount the formidable testing requirements. Vistatec’s ability to spin up multiple installation environments in just a few minutes greatly alleviated their concerns.

### Growing Complexity and Slipping Schedules

However, as product complexity continued to grow and more languages were added, the testing workload kept climbing. Vistatec would log a critical bug, then wait for the next build to find the fix. But then either that build would fail, or the fix wouldn’t fully address the issue. The entire process of logging a bug, waiting for the next build, and then checking it, would thus start all over again. Soon the product builds began failing – but only on localized versions. Worse, the client’s own developers were often unable to even reproduce the issue. As a result, many bugs on international versions were getting closed out as “not repro.”

Eventually the client hit a breaking point. The agile development cycle wasn’t leaving enough time for the necessary testing tasks: writing test cases, translating resources, getting a new build, then regressing and testing the software. Test teams simply weren’t making enough progress before the release sprint. The client’s international managers realized that something needed to be done.

*“I’ve been working in localization for years, my entire career. This is the first time that I’ve had to go to a development team and tell them (...) that I couldn’t make their deadlines and that I needed more time from them.”*



## | Actions

### **A Bold Idea**

The client's internal international team went to the product development team with a confession and a plan. They wanted to better support the development team, but they realized that they themselves were a bottleneck. Because they were mediating between Vistatec and the developers to answer questions, check on build status, and push builds to Vistatec, they had inadvertently become an extra step that was having disproportionately negative impact on rollout.

Their proposed solution was bold: they wanted to remove themselves as middlemen and directly integrate Vistatec with the product development organization. They would create a 1-to-1 relationship between the Vistatec test team and their internal developers. Questions would flow between the two teams so that issues could be resolved swiftly over email, phone, chat or via remote desktop. Builds would be made available as soon as they were ready, without the need to propagate to an FTP site. Finally, Vistatec test engineers would be able to access the product repositories directly if needed.

The client gradually initiated this integration process. The new arrangement with Vistatec started out with simple calls and remote desktop sessions. Vistatec would log into the respective builds and then show the client's developers whatever problem they were seeing while testing. Then the issue would be discussed in real time. If it was a bug, they would walk through a fix; if it was a configuration or installation glitch, a workaround would be proposed. Vistatec would document the expected fixes or workarounds for the next test pass.

For the development team, this incremental approach to integrating an external vendor helped build their confidence in Vistatec's meticulous testing, as well as highlight the quality of the issues that were being surfaced.

Over time, this integration deepened. For two years now, Vistatec has been directly involved in the product development organization and pretty much indistinguishable from the client's own full-time employees, both in terms of authority, as well as level of contribution.



## | Results

### Recent Performance

Recent software releases showcase the improvements the Vistatec integration has yielded. Vistatec's test manager was engaged very early in the project. Builds quickly reached a level of stability, and bugs were found much earlier instead of clogging up the backlog. Where hundreds of bugs had previously piled up at the very end of a sprint, needing to be regressed and closed before the release date, they were now closed nearly as fast as they were opened. Recent releases showed the classic bug resolution profile of a well-maintained schedule: many bugs opened and closed at project start before bug counts tapered off nicely towards the release date. The client's team was especially appreciative of the reduced need for late-night conference calls.

Even though the volume of work was just as large as it had been in previous releases and the scope of change was just as substantial, deeply integrating Vistatec allowed for much better risk management in terms of schedule, quality, and budget.

*"This arrangement did not happen overnight. Instead, it evolved over time, one successful step following another. It's a trust-based relationship, really. We have been in this industry for many years; we aren't impressed with the usual translation company metrics. It's harder to fool us because we know what we are doing. It's risky to integrate a partner to the extent that we have. We are now dependent on Vistatec. But we are calm and confident in this relationship. We trust them, and we know they won't let us down. We aren't guessing, either; we have years of experience to demonstrate that our trust in Vistatec is well-justified."*

The integration between the client and Vistatec's test team is now complete. The client is extremely happy with the level of test engagement, and they value Vistatec's extremely low staff turnover as it provides a deep level of institutional knowledge within their test organization. And whenever the inevitable turnover does occur, the transition process is thorough. Retention of information has been excellent, continuity is maintained, and disruptions are kept to a minimum.

*"Vistatec is not really a vendor to us; we consider them a partner, a Platinum Partner. They have replaced the internal structure we would have had before, and we have integrated them as part of our organization in the same way. You only do that with someone after you build up a lot of trust with them. The ability to integrate them tightly into our dev team has made a huge difference."*