



Case Study | Friends Provident



“The work we are doing with AppLabs in terms of the creation of a Test Center of Excellence is of strategic importance to our business. Over the months we have been working together we have formed a very close partnership, and we are able to trust AppLabs to deliver the ideas and solutions we need.”

Peter Bates, Manager of Development Support Services, FRIENDS®



The Company | Friends Provident is one of the leading financial services groups in the UK and a member of the FTSE100 Index of leading UK companies.

Established in 1832, the FRIENDS® business was founded on high principles, to alleviate the hardship of families facing misfortune. Today FRIENDS® has two core businesses:

- The Life and Pensions business markets a broadly based range of life and pensions products through a number of distribution channels, including Independent Financial Advisors in the UK, direct links to pension providers, and an international operation all supported by rapidly developing ecommerce based systems
- The Asset Management business - ISIS Asset Management plc - manages funds of circa £63 billion and markets a wide range of investment products both to personal and institutional customers. It is currently merging with F&C and this merger will create the fourth largest fund manager in the UK and, in respect of managing pension scheme assets, one of the top ten in Europe

Both of FRIENDS® core businesses are in the top 10 of their respective sectors in the UK and both are also included in the FTSE4Good Index, acknowledging a reputation as a socially responsible organization.

The Challenge | The FRIENDS® strategy is to build on its position as one of the leading Life and Pensions and Asset Management groups in the UK. Central to this is the application of technology and ecommerce to enhance distribution, improve service and reduce costs. The IT department has a mission to make IT a differentiator for FRIENDS®.

Craig Gibbons is a Senior Consultant within the IT department of FRIENDS®, with responsibility for Testing Best Practice.

He says: “Much of our business is based upon distribution by Independent Financial Advisors (IFAs), and in order to serve this demanding community properly our technology solution has developed at a fast pace. Working closely with AppLabs we have started to enhance our testing processes, with the aim of ensuring reliability and consistency of the delivered solution.

“As a business we require certainty that our delivered solutions will perform as we expect them to, as it is now very simple for an IFA

to move business elsewhere if we do not provide the excellence of service they expect. To this end, a great deal of effort is being put into ensuring the success of our projects by starting testing earlier in the lifecycle and ensuring that test methods utilized provide us with our desired solutions.”

The Solution | AppLabs has worked with FRIENDS® since 2001, initially providing consultancy around the newly acquired MERCURY™ toolset, and ensuring that the TestDirector implementation was customized to match with the FRIENDS® DSDM project lifecycle.

Craig Gibbons says: “Working closely with AppLabs has enabled us to provide training on the MERCURY™ tools that reflects our business priorities and processes, in addition to educating our staff in their use. Were we not working in close partnership with AppLabs, we would not be able to do this.”

AppLabs’ knowledge of the FRIENDS® business, coupled with its wider experiences as a company, have enabled it to provide much added value.

Peter Bates is the manager of Development Support Services and has overall responsibility for providing support to IT development projects for specific tools and development processes.

He says: “The work we are doing with AppLabs in terms of the creation of a Test Center of Excellence is of strategic importance to our business. Over the months we have been working together we have formed a very close partnership, and we are able to trust AppLabs to deliver the ideas and solutions we need.

“AppLabs is able to provide us with a wide perspective on industry best practice in terms of testing, which in turn provokes thought and discussion internally as to the best approach for FRIENDS®. I have no doubt that we would have been able to create the Test Center of Excellence material internally, but it would have cost more and taken longer to develop the breadth of ideas and proposals that we have generated with AppLabs.

“They have demonstrated a willingness to work in many ways across many projects, and are an important business partner to FRIENDS®.”