



# **Building a generic testing platform for education platforms on opposite sides of the spectrum**

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## **Achievement summary**

### **What was delivered and what was the result?**

Sanoma Learning makes learning platforms for schools in several countries within Europe. There has been talking about a new testing platform for about a year. But it stays with talking. The old platform is not performing well. Just after school starts, it's decided, a new platform has to be built and be live at school start next year. This platform needs to be generic because about 6 learning platforms within Sanoma learning will be using this platform. So it needs to be generic. Other than that we use the newest technology. We're building microservices. With micro frontends that are used within the different learning platforms. A year later, it's a fact, the new platform is live. Most people didn't believe we would make it but we did.

## **Achievement details**

### **Please explain the details of the initiative and the approach that was taken.**

There are a few reasons that make working on this testing platform so interesting.

#### **1) Microservices**

First of all, it's a way of thinking that is pretty new within our organization. Besides that, with microservices, it's very important to be very strict in responsibilities. To know where the value is in making a new microservice. On the one side, there is a price in communication, that needs to be through APIs now. On the other side, there is a possibility to reuse the component which can not only benefit our team but other teams within the company too.

#### **2) Stakeholders**

Everyone within the company will be using the same testing platform in the end. That means that we need to onboard all different kinds of sectors. Primary education, secondary education but also higher education. They all have such a different way of looking at everything! The way things are structured is completely different. That needed to come together in one model. That means that on the one side we needed to know a lot of everyone's wishes to make choices on how to model everything. But on the other hand, we still wanted to work agile. What was very hard on the one side, but a blessing on the other side was that we needed to connect with the other teams. They needed to use our APIs but also use our micro frontends therefore they needed to know exactly what they were connecting to. And because this was all within our

own company we were able to come closer and actually work together and make each other's work better.

### 3) New ways of working

We started doing design sprint workshops for the first time within the company. And all remote of course, because of corona. Being able to experiment like this, and have a company that is willing to experiment with us although we were on a very tight path. This made us come closer to our stakeholders on one side. But on the other side made it a lot faster to gather all the requirements and gain consensus between stakeholders.

### 4) Setbacks

Of course, there are setbacks. Halfway through the year, so only half a year before we needed to go live, a lot of people from the team needed to leave the company and we started working together with developers from Poland. With the enormous time pressure, we already had this really was a setback for us. On top of that, our scrum master also became ill. But I think if you have a good core, you can do anything. And that turned out to be true. The team turned out very good and the velocity kept on growing.

### 5) Working together

Working together with teams who do not work (and also don't understand) in an agile way of working. Another team that we also need to facilitate are the people that write the tests. They have very specific wishes and they don't really understand if you tell them that something is done somewhere during the coming sprint. With a lot of patience, a lot of demo's, but also a lot of genuine interest in what they need and why they need it, we also started working together really well.

## **Key achievement**

### **Why do you think this initiative should receive the award?**

I think that as a business analyst you really are in the middle of things. In this case, it meant that I was really able to explain very well to all of the different stakeholders why we should or shouldn't do things. We were able to say no to a few things that were always done like one way in the past, but we chose a different direction for the sake of the project. And that turned out to be the right choice. It's one thing to make good software, but it's another thing to take everyone with you on your path. We really guarded our way forward. Against all odds, we made the project successful, but more importantly, I think that we started to work to better within our company in a

much better way. There is a really good basis for the platform that will be built upon for the coming years.