mabl

Silver Star BRANDS
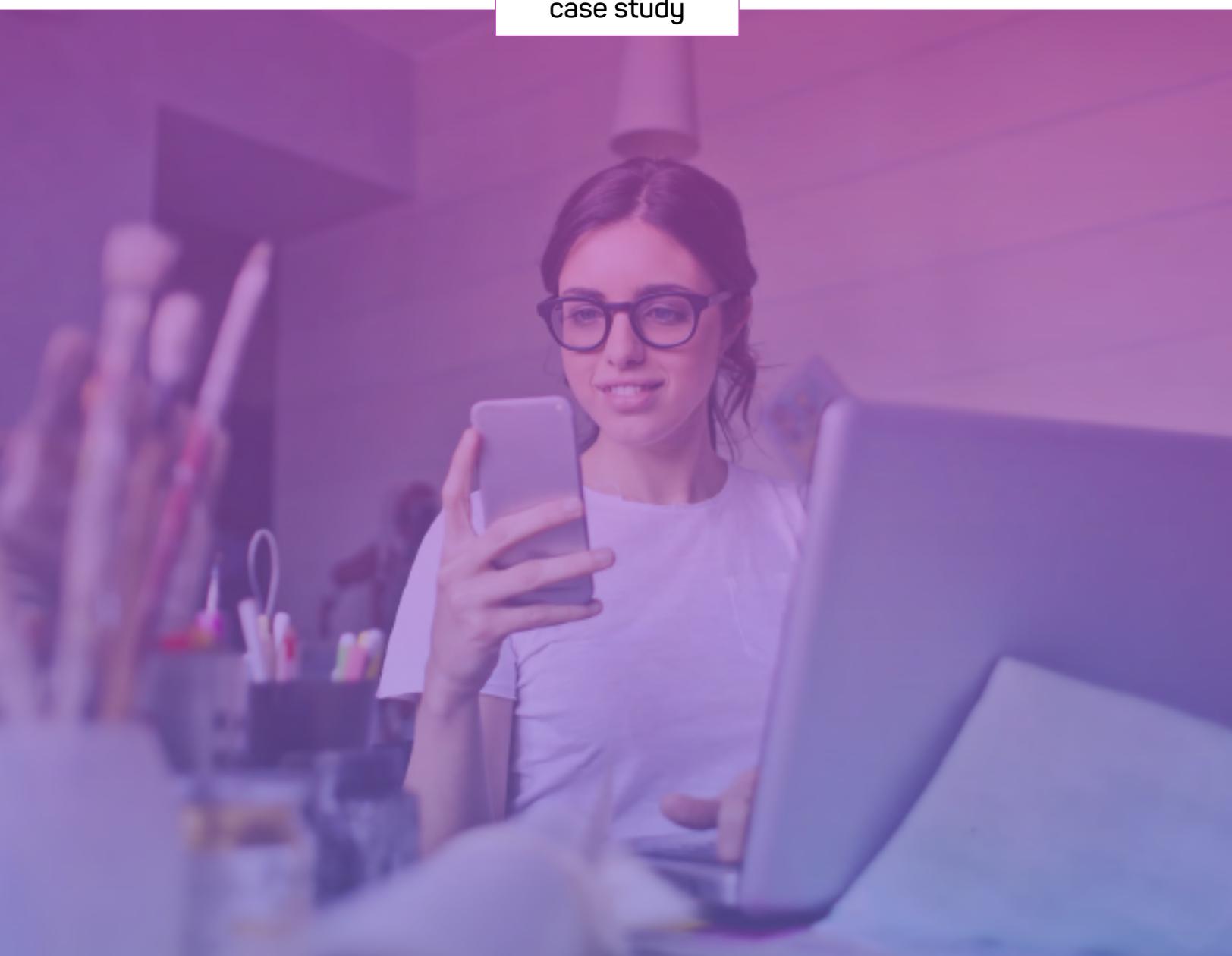
case study

About
Silver Star Brands

Diversified brand management company offering a wide variety of products.

One of America's first and largest direct marketers of consumer gifts and household products, Silver Star Brands showcases over 12,000 products in all, ranging from home accessories to cookware to high-end decor to candy. With catalogs reaching more than 120 million households, Silver Star Brands processes 5 million orders annually.

Headquartered in Oshkosh, WI, USA

www.silverstarbrands.com

Describe mabl in 3 words:

"Easy, Fun, Innovative."

Anna Bilek,
Web Quality Assurance Analyst, Silver Star Brands

Meet Anna.

Anna is a Web Quality Assurance Analyst at Silver Star Brands and works alongside one other QA professional and 6 developers working across multiple brand websites. The QA duo are in charge of testing and managing any code changes that occur across the main sites. Anna primarily does manual testing today, but test automation is a direction that she wants to take her career. She regularly sets aside personal time to learn about coding and leading test automation practices.

Silver Star Brands teams follow agile and scrum practices, so Anna regularly balances many different duties in her day-to-day. Anna works alongside the Marketing team where she assists with problems that occur in production, helping to troubleshoot, triage, and resolve issues. She's also involved with larger-scale projects, such as a recent project of migrating over to a new A/B testing service and testing all of the dynamic objects on the brand sites.

Though manual testing is the team's forte, automation has been on their horizon for a long time. They started their automation journey a couple years ago, but later found their initial toolset, Tricentis Tosca, to be unscalable.

The Challenge

"There were several areas that needed to be touched in order to update tests. The more I tried to figure out how the tests worked, the more I struggled because whatever needed to be fixed was well beyond my knowledge base. It just took longer, and longer, and longer to try to fix them."

There was a brief initiative to implement automated testing before Anna started at Silver Star Brands. Tricentis Tosca was brought in, and tests were developed, maintained, and run by an intern with a software engineering background.

After the intern left the team, the project got taken over by a remote tester with no coding experience and was given the responsibility of running the tests and making simple updates to the tests as needed. After the remote tester left, The toolset was finally taken over by Anna, who also lacked the coding experience needed to adeptly create test scripts within the toolset.

Anna was initially able to maintain the test suite, but soon after, major style and content changes to their main brand sites broke most of the tests. Anna tried to update and fix the tests, but found the learning curve to be very steep. After pulling together as much knowledge as possible from the available training materials, Anna made minimal progress, as updating tests took a large amount of time.

To improve her proficiency, she requested additional training from the tooling vendor, which was quoted to cost thousands of dollars — a price too steep to win the budget for what the team considered a side project and not a priority concern.

The Solution

"mabl solved all my pain points in the way that I could do what I was trying to do in the other toolset, but faster, easier, and with less of a learning curve. It's perfect for me."

Anna was introduced to mabl via a blog post that her IT Director shared in their Slack workspace about up-and-coming machine-learning-based testing tools. Even with a full workload, Anna volunteered to run a proof of concept for mabl in her spare time - about a day per sprint - running experiments and sharing with the team quick summaries and demos, and was able to get the ball rolling to evaluate mabl as a replacement.

In the little cycles she had dedicated to evaluating mabl, with a fresh trial account, Anna was able to create a handful of end-to-end tests almost immediately with its rich, easy-to-navigate interface. With additional aid from videos in mabl's help documentation and mabl's customer service support, Anna was able to create more detailed, targeted, and in-depth tests during the trial period alone.

"I created 5 sets of tests in mabl in 15 minutes that I couldn't figure out how to just fix in the other toolset."

Tests in mabl aren't just easy to create, but they're easy to maintain. With screenshots for every step of every test, troubleshooting test failures and updating tests for major site changes take mere minutes.

"The marketing team had turned off an A/B test that I had set up as one of the first steps of my tests - to close a box. It took me 15 minutes to adjust all 15 tests, because I just updated one of my test flows. It cascaded through all of my tests, and also updated all the ones in production."

Another major selling point of mabl is being environment-agnostic. Silver Star Brands' 2 major brand sites are in parity, differing only in CSS styling. This gives Anna the ability to create a test once and run it across the main brand sites with a simple dropdown menu selection within mabl's test Plan configuration interface. As the 3rd and 4th planned sites are brought into partiy, these tests will easily transfer.

This, combined with mabl's auto-healing capability, able to withstand styling updates, greatly reduces maintenance time of tests going forward.

"I can take everything I'm doing in just the Miles Kimball platform and copy those tests over into Walter Drake. Nine times out of ten I won't have to touch it, and it will work. I'm not doing twice the work for a different platform."

It took days to update a single test in the previous automation toolset — it only takes 15 minutes to create an entire test suite with mabl.

Empowering manual testers to begin a career in automated testing

"It's nice to put together a handful of tests that I can keep running on a regular basis. So far it's definitely saved me a ton of time — a ton — where I'm not going through and double-checking a million different things that I used to get really bored with."

Test automation must be a piece of your testing strategy in agile and DevOps teams that ship frequently, like Anna's. There simply isn't enough time to test everything manually. For Anna's team, the previous test automation solution not only didn't deliver on test automation, but diminished the *potential* of test automation and caused Anna's team to not prioritize it at all.

On top of that, after years of sunk time, Anna's team found the previous tooling to be too bulky for their needs, and the skillset it required just wasn't scalable.

mabl's ease of use, bounty of training materials, and helpful customer success team empowers Anna by not only giving back time in her day, but by enabling her to lead and own the automation efforts for her team. By being exposed to backend concepts via mabl's features, such as data tables, conditional steps, and JavaScript snippets, Anna finds mabl to be a platform where she can apply what she learns from the coding and test automation courses she takes in her personal time, driving her towards her test automation career goals.

"Automated testing is a direction that I want to take my career, but I've never been able to move my way into it because there's always scriptwriting involved.

Now I have the ability to do automated testing, and to be the automation coordinator for automated testing. I'm making a lot more connections to things that make more sense. It's definitely empowering me to move my career from being purely a manual tester to automated tester."

mabl enables manual testers to grow their career in automation.

Get a mabl demo

![Laptop displaying the mabl website next to a glass vase holding a single green leaf. The website reads "Bringing testing joy to a DevOps world. Only mabl offers scriptless cross-browser testing, auto-healing tests, visual testing, and diagnostics in one simple service. mabl helps you improve the speed and quality of your release pipeline." MacBook Pro.]