

CLIENT CASE STUDY

How **SSE Energy Services'** pioneering adoption of automation is underpinning an industry-leading transformation that is setting the pace of change in the energy sector



Chief Information Officer Philip Clayson is putting digital agility at the heart of the company's strategic transformation plans for the future, following the recent acquisition of SSE Energy Services by OVO Energy.

OVO Energy was founded in 2009 and redesigned the energy experience to be fair, effortless, green and simple for all customers. Following the acquisition of SSE Energy Services, today OVO Energy and its Retail partners serve nearly 5 million customers, all striving to deliver more affordable clean energy for everyone.

Introduction

SSE Energy Services has been supplying power to millions of UK homes for decades. The technology infrastructure within the company had been built and maintained with dependability and assurance at its core.

Clayson is now empowering the 1,000 strong IT team to adopt a learn-fast, fail-fast culture and mindset, while at the same time maintaining the performance and quality of their outputs. Key to achieving this has been extending the company's partnership with Expleo.

Through the adoption of Expleo' automated testing solutions, SSE Energy Services can now bring new products to market faster, without sacrificing quality.

With customers' digital engagement increasing and the introduction of smart metering within homes, SSE Energy Services knew it had to focus on digital agility and innovative product offerings. In order to accelerate this direction, SSE Energy Services appointed Philip Clayson as CIO in August 2019, bringing experience of driving fast-paced digital transformation for companies including News Corporation, BT and TalkTalk.

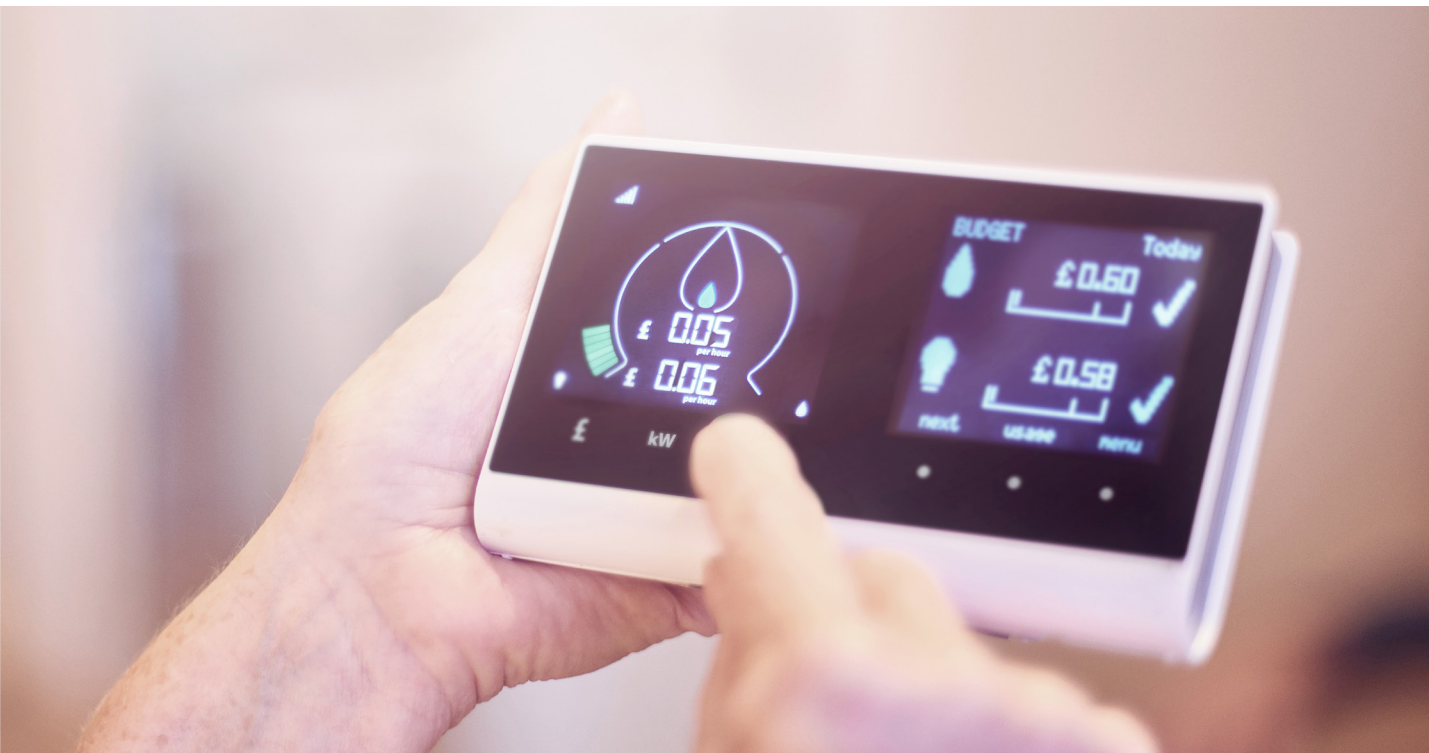
With increasing numbers of new digital enabled products to deliver to market, at an accelerated pace, we needed to leverage technology and expertise to help us drive up our competitive advantage and increase our agility.

Philip Clayson
CIO, SSE Energy Services



SSE Energy Services formed a strategic partnership with Expleo, a leading technology and engineering consultancy. As the two companies previously worked closely together, SSE Energy Services had trust in Expleo's expertise to help with a key part of

the programme. This would help SSE Energy Services maintain performance and quality, but crucially boost agility, shortening product and system releases from several weeks to just a couple of days, by providing a pioneering approach to automation.



Automation first

Expleo was in an excellent position to advise the company on how to best move to a framework that automated the entire testing lifecycle for all of its complex and integrated retail systems.

Julie Heneghan, Client Director at Expleo, said: *“Many companies use automation on low-risk, fringe applications and as a result deliver limited value to their organisation. However, our in-depth understanding of SSE Energy Services’ systems meant it was clear to us that an automation-first approach would deliver the biggest possible impact in terms of value.”*

To help achieve the transformation, the relationship moved from a standard services delivery model, to a strategic and innovation-led partnership, with SSE Energy Services entrusting Expleo to deliver best-in-class testing and assurance that would reduce the cost and frequency of system defects.

Expleo helps SSE Energy Services to enable mass testing of the software deployed to customers for smart metering. This includes testing the smart meter itself before it’s installed into customers’ homes, to testing the app on the in-home display which helps customers see how much energy they are using.

Now, instead of a traditional services supplier model, SSE Energy Services works in partnership with us to map out the future IT change roadmap safely in the knowledge that Expleo automatically delivers the quality assurance they need without any effort on their part.

Julie Heneghan, Client Director, Expleo

Innovation to the fore

To best deliver the benefits of automation and other improvement initiatives in the future, SSE Energy Services and Expleo have created a joint innovation board with dedicated funds to formalise the creation of new ideas and concepts and ultimately put them into practice.

Combining the best of technology and engineering, Expleo is a digital partner for the future for energy and electric vehicle companies. As energy and mobility markets converge, Expleo provides clients with end-to-end expertise in the design, development and implementation of a seamless customer experience. Its track record of delivery in smart energy billing solutions, battery charging technology, electric vehicles and the wider smart grid puts it in a unique position to help its clients innovate for the future.

Innovation is at the heart of what we do at Expleo.

But for us, it's about making incremental changes, on a continuous basis, to drive bigger overall gain.

This also allows us to monitor and measure each innovation and work out what it's actually achieved for our client's business, so we can take a swift decision on whether to keep it or move onto something else.

Stephen Magennis,
Managing Director, Expleo Technology UK



SSE Energy Services has continuous insight into the progress of testing and innovation through Expleo's Quality Intelligence Platform (QIP), part of its innovative AI and analytics offering. It monitors execution and results, demonstrating release on release productivity and efficiency gains by aggregating the data into a dashboard, giving a real-time and predictive view of progress, quality and velocity.

We want to get our solutions to market quickly, but we can't sacrifice quality. There are critical journeys where customers rely on us to deliver every single day. Our automation-first approach and partnership with Expleo has helped us to deliver quality to our customers.

Tom Little

IT Delivery Manager, SSE Energy Services



Exceeding expectations

In applying the new automation tooling, SSE Energy Services is already seeing compounded benefits. These include smoke-testing new environments in near-real-time and a reduction in manual test effort of up to 65 per cent.

"This enables the SSE Energy Services technology team previously involved in this area to have more time to focus on new initiatives for the company to accelerate the pace of change", says Clayson.

The direct result for SSE Energy Services is that new customer offerings can be pushed through faster – helping it set the pace in the market. In fact, the speed of output is now 2-3 days, rather than 2-3 weeks or months with an overall cost saving of 60 per cent.



Technology + people + culture = pace

Having the right technological tools is a vital part of any digital transformation. But in order for the investment to be a success, there needed to be an internal shift within SSE Energy Services toward a highly engaged, learn-fast fail-fast culture and mindset.

To this end, SSE Energy Services invested in upskilling staff, including introducing formal accreditation in delivery management techniques such as Agile as well as technological disciplines to increase agility from the bottom up. Expleo aided this programme by providing Scrum Master training to key SSE Energy Services team members, including project managers and product owners.

Industry leading digital transformation for growth

With the acceleration of digital and agility at SSE Energy Services, it is now much more nimble when it comes to dealing with change. This proved crucial with the unexpected arrival of Covid-19. The fact that both internal and external partner teams were able to quickly pivot to operating virtually, with no impact on services, demonstrates that its transformational journey has brought additional benefit to SSE Energy Services and ultimately its customers

Our digital transformation means that IT is now an engine for growth and competitive advantage. It enables SSE Energy Services to swiftly respond to change. The team and our partners including Expleo should be proud of being part of what must be the biggest digital transformation the sector has seen due to Covid-19.

Philip Clayson, CIO, SSE Energy Services

The company's successful digital transformation, underpinned by its pioneering adoption of automation in partnership with Expleo, means that it is continuing to set the pace of change in the industry.

For further information, or if you have any other questions, please write an email to info@expleogroup.com

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