# Ensuring a More Engaging Digital Experience

Delivering a great experience to sports fans by assuring quality for the NRL's revamped Digital Network of websites and apps

**KEY OUTCOMES:**

- Assured quality for 60 upgraded websites, iOS and Android apps
- Network supports 2.8 million weekly average users a week
- Network reached target of 800,000 registered users 4 years ahead of schedule

## Problem

Having observed that today's sports fans increasingly consume, comment, and share content as it happens, the National Rugby League (NRL) began a substantial digital transformation project in 2016 to address this need by building, operating, and producing content for an entirely new network of digital products. This consisted of scaling up its digital team across product, technology, design, development, engineering, and editorial to help build and operate this new, internally run initiative.

This project would allow them to implement best practices observed by other major global sports leagues and draw upon their own successes with properties such as the State of Origin, which consistently ranks among the top 10 most-watched programs on Australian TV each year.

The new NRL Digital Network involved reworking the digital assets of NRL.com, the 16 clubs, New South Wales Rugby League (NSWRL), and Queensland Rugby League (QRL). These 60 different websites and apps would require significant investment in quality assurance ahead of the relaunch to ensure they delivered a premium experience to fans.

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## Solution

Based on Planit's successes as a quality partner for NRL projects such as their Salesforce CRM interface with Ticketek and the NRL MyLeague app, we were again selected to partner for the NRL Digital Network project in mid-2017.

Planit carried out functional testing on websites including NRL.com, NSWRL.com.au, QRL.com.au, and 16 clubs, each of which were re-designed with a cleaner look and improved navigation. Along with the new look websites, we provided quality assurance for the 19 upgraded apps for the NRL, clubs, and states on both iOS and Android.

The new NRL Account feature, which is used to access all parts of the NRL Digital Network, was thoroughly tested. We ensured the single, free account allows users to get personalised news and highlights from their club's website and app, as well as receive special NRL ticketing and merchandise offers.

Another key feature we tested was Match Centres, which acts as an information hub for a match in real time. The live timeline of events, team and player lists, team statistics, and more were validated for functionality and accuracy.

The Watch NRL app was developed to cater to overseas fans of the sport. We carried out functional and compatibility testing on the app to ensure that it smoothly delivers live matches, up-to-date game tracking, and other team and player news regardless of a user's location.

Compatibility testing was also done on all websites and apps to ensure they worked and displayed correctly across all popular devices, hardware, operating systems, and browsers. Performance testing was done to ensure fast speeds, steady streams, and no outages across peak website and app load.

Penetration tests were carried out to validate website and app security against the OWASP top ten web application security risks. A research-based review of the content delivery network's (CDN) Denial-of-Service (DoS) protection was also carried out.

The redesigned websites and apps were made to be more accessible than before. We audited their accessibility to ensure they met the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA standard.

With so many digital assets to quality assure for the NRL Digital Network, we had numerous consultants on-site at the NRL during the project. Our onshore and offshore Digital QA test centres were also used to add more capability and expertise to the project, as well as extend the testing window beyond standard business hours.

# Outcome

Our testing efforts on the new NRL Digital Network ensured that it met its official relaunch on time in December 2017 and on budget. The new look digital assets of NRL.com, the 16 clubs, NSWRL, and QRL; the NRL Account; and the 19 upgraded iOS and Android apps for the NRL, clubs, and states all successfully went live.

The cleaner look, improved navigation, and expanded functionality of the NRL Digital Network delivered positive results. By June 2018, 800,000 people signed up for the NRL Account, with approximately 60% of those being non-club members.

NRL.com and associated websites averaged 2.6 million visitors per week, and video views increased by 53% to 300,000 streams per game. The number of live pass subscriptions bought via Telstra to watch matches on mobile devices also grew 95% compared to the year before.

The new digital assets resulted in a rise of 10-30% in membership amongst the individual clubs that year, with membership across all the clubs during the 2018 season surpassing 300,000 compared to the same time in 2017. Some teams, such as West Tigers, broke its membership record that season.

The success of the NRL Digital Network went beyond the launch. By May 2018, it was reporting 24.4 million live streams across the last 87 games.

Our support of the NRL Digital Network extended into 2018 with the testing of the new Inside Pass feature, which provides additional content, such as extended highlights and full match replays. New apps, such as NRL Fantasy 2018 and NRL Tipping, also needed quality assurance.

By the end of 2019, the NRL Digital Network had 1.4 million NRL Account users, well ahead of the NRL's initial 2022 target of 800,000. It has more than 2.8 million weekly average users a week, while club and state websites and app use grew 30% that year alone.