

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

How First Orion hit 40% faster release cycles.

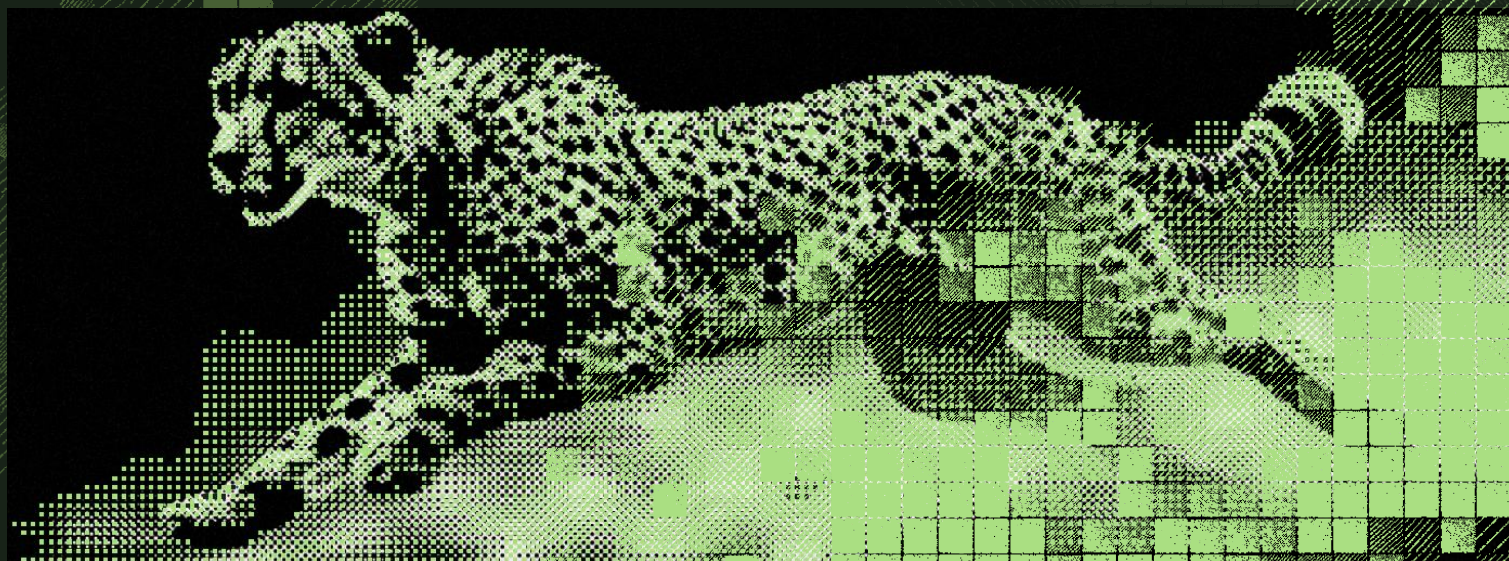
First Orion traded a manual, unscalable testing process for a platform that delivers the predictability, control, and scale its customers demand — freeing 35% of engineering capacity in the process.

INDUSTRY

Telecom software
& security

USE CASE

Real device testing, automation, and
validating AI-driven and custom workflows



40%

FASTER CYCLE TIME FOR MOBILE
APP AND TELECOM SOLUTIONS

35%

OF ENGINEERING AND QA CAPACITY
FREED FOR HIGHER-VALUE WORK

10%+

REDUCTION ON PHYSICAL
DEVICE SPEND ALONE

Zero

HANDS-ON DEVICE MANAGEMENT
AND MAINTENANCE

About

First Orion operates at one of the most consequential moments in modern communications: when a phone rings or a message arrives. The company shields wireless subscribers and business users from scammers and bad actors. It also powers branded communications by helping businesses present a verified, trusted identity when reaching their customers through calls and messages.

Both facets require the same underlying guarantee: that what a consumer sees on their screen is correct, consistent, and trustworthy. That guarantee has to hold across every enterprise customer, every device model, every OS version, and every network condition. For a company whose product is the phone call experience, testing is a business-critical function that underpins how First Orion delivers predictability to the customers that depend on it.

Profile

INDUSTRY

Telecom Software
and Security

USE CASES

Real Device
Testing,
Automation, and
Validating AI-
Driven and
Custom Workflows

TEAMS USING AURA

Engineering,
QA,
Product,
Support,
Sales,
Customer Success

INTERVIEWED

Mark Himelfarb,
CTO, First Orion



The Challenge

01

The gap between test environment and production reality.

Mark Himelfarb, First Orion's CTO, describes the testing challenge as analogous to an iceberg. You need to see what's happening on the device and understand the user experience — but the real complexity lies beneath the surface.

Testing a branded call isn't simply confirming that a logo appears. It requires understanding the full telecommunications infrastructure — every hop between the originating network, the enterprise customer, and the receiving device — to know why an experience is rendering a certain way. That diagnostic depth is what separates a company that can guarantee outcomes from one that can only observe them.

Before Sauce Labs, First Orion's approach was entirely manual.

“Piles of devices on desks. We called it ‘musical phones.’ ... Everybody needed to be able to do these tests, and you were either having to maintain piles of phones, update them, charge them, make sure they're in the right configuration, and make sure the right SIMs are in them.”

MARK HIMELFARB • CTO, FIRST ORION

The overhead was more than a logistical inconvenience. Himelfarb estimates up to 10% of team members' time was consumed simply getting to a state where one test could run.

Configurations drifted across time zones: automation that worked on one machine failed on another.

The forcing function became clear as the business grew. Customers needed confidence that branded calls and messages would render correctly across an ever-expanding matrix of devices and OS versions, and manual testing at a desk couldn't deliver that assurance at scale.



The Challenge

Before & after

DIMENSION	LEGACY METHODS	WITH SAUCE LABS
Device access	⊗ Physical phones on desks, duplicated for every office	⊙ Real devices with live U.S. carrier SIMs, on demand
Setup overhead	⊗ Up to 10% of team time spent getting ready to run one test	⊙ Zero hands-on device management or SIM configuration
Release cycle	⊗ Manual, sequential validation per device and OS version	⊙ Automated parallel testing across device groups, OEMs, and OS vers.
Diagnostics	⊗ Observe the surface; infer what happens in the layers beneath	⊙ Device logs streamed live and joined with network and carrier signals
Cost curve	⊗ Hardware spend compounding with every hire and location	⊙ 10%+ direct savings that no longer scale with headcount

“Ineffective, highly labor-intensive, and most importantly, absolutely unscalable.”

MARK HIMELFARB • CTO, FIRST ORION



The Decision

02

The bar other vendors couldn't clear.

First Orion needed real devices with real SIM cards on real U.S. carriers. The team needed the ability to receive and originate actual phone calls and SMS messages. And it needed the solution to be programmatically controllable at every layer of the stack.

Because First Orion's testing workflow had to integrate signals from across the telecom infrastructure (device logs, network behavior, inbound and outbound call events), the testing platform had to offer an open, extensible API. A closed portal with a fixed set of operations wouldn't work.

“Some vendors provide programmatic interfaces, but they're very severely limited — you can only do this but not that, you cannot export or import data, you cannot manage traffic or emulate various conditions. We did not find those things in other vendors.”

MARK HIMELFARB · CTO, FIRST ORION

Most software testing customers are validating an app's UI or user flow. First Orion needed to test the cellular communication layer underneath the UI — a requirement that demanded a vendor capable of engaging with unusual needs, not just tolerating them.

Sauce Labs cleared both bars. Its [Real Device Cloud](#) offered genuine device diversity across Apple, Google, and other OEM hardware with live SIM cards on U.S. carriers. The recently released [Real Device Access API](#) gave First Orion the programmatic control and depth that Sauce Labs' competitors couldn't match.

NON-NEGOTIABLE REQUIREMENTS

Real devices, real SIMs

Device diversity across Apple, Google, and other OEM hardware, on real U.S. carriers.

Live calls and SMS

The ability to originate and receive actual calls and text messages, not simulate them.

Programmatic control

An open API at every layer: traffic management, data import and export, emulated conditions.



Implementation

03

Where real devices meet programmable infrastructure.

First Orion didn't simply plug into Sauce Labs and run off-the-shelf test suites. It used the Real Device Access API as a foundation for custom internal tooling — infrastructure that wouldn't have been possible on a more constrained platform.

Benefits of using the Real Device Access API:

Real-time issue visibility

Automated test sessions don't expose live screen state by default. First Orion built tooling on the Real Device API that mirrors everything on a device's screen mid-session, so support and QA can watch experiences live and replay them to pinpoint failures.

Live log streaming, unified signals

Their most sophisticated custom solution captures device logs in real time and joins them with signals from elsewhere in the telecom stack — one view of network, carrier, and device at once. That single source of truth makes root cause analysis possible at speed.

Persistent sessions

The persistent session model holds a continuous connection to a device for up to 18 hours, all through HTTP requests — eliminating repetitive initialization, setup, and teardown when testing real-time telecom events.

Adoption expanded quickly beyond engineering. What began as a narrowly scoped use case grew to include QA, product, support, and eventually sales and customer success teams, who began using the Sauce Labs platform for product demonstrations and proof-of-concept walkthroughs with prospects.



Results

04

What release confidence at scale looks like.

The outcomes span cost and capacity recovery, cycle time, overhead, and a strategic shift in how First Orion builds products.

35%

Capacity reclaimed
for higher-value work

Engineering and QA time once spent on device setup and inventories now goes to product development, architecture, test design, and quality analysis.

20–40%

Faster, more predictable
release cycles

Parallel automated testing across device groups, OEMs, and OS versions delivered a 20% baseline gain across products — up to 40% for mobile app and telecom solutions.

10%+

Cost optimized
and contained

Retiring physical inventory removed purchase, maintenance, and configuration costs that scaled with every hire and location — savings that no longer compound as the company grows.

Increased

Innovation and Development

Freed time went into deeper product work and new features. Product teams used live device visualization to demonstrate concepts earlier in the build cycle.

First Orion is also running AI models against signals captured through Sauce Labs devices and Real Device Access API by analyzing telemetry data to surface insights and automate decision-making faster than manual review allows. The platform has become a data source, a development tool, and an innovation accelerator, not just a testing environment.

"The capability we gained with Sauce Labs to run tests at a very large scale, across multiple device groups, multiple operating system versions, and OEMs has been truly fundamental. We would never be able to do this manually at this level. That's a huge win," said Himelfarb.



What's Next

05

A strategic partner for the product and AI roadmap.

Sauce Labs' impact at First Orion goes beyond any individual metric or team. When new product concepts emerge, the platform is now assumed to be part of the architecture.

Himelfarb recently talked with First Orion's website team, which had encountered a device-specific rendering issue after a launch. The team hadn't considered using Sauce Labs for web testing. His response: "Did you not know about Sauce Labs?" They do now. The platform that began in a single engineering team is now a shared organizational capability.

First Orion is also evaluating Sauce Labs' role in its AI strategy, including the potential integration of an MCP server into its development workflow.

The combination of Sauce Labs device telemetry and AI-powered analysis is foundational to how the company intends to build and validate next-generation communication products.

“We’ve now got product ideas that are going to rely very heavily on Sauce Labs. We’re actually counting on it being part of our product strategy.”

MARK HIMELFARB • CTO, FIRST ORION

For technology leaders navigating a similar decision, Himelfarb's advice is direct: “Take the dive, do it, explore Sauce Labs, and spend the time understanding the level of sophistication that they bring to the table. I would absolutely recommend them as a company, recommend them as a vendor, and most importantly, recommend them as a technology partner.”

LEARN MORE & NEXT STEPS

See what release confidence looks like on your own device matrix.

