

Why Do You Test?

Achieving Consensus on Clearly Defined Objectives



ARGYRIS MAKRISS
14, ZALOUDOU STR., 106 79 ATHENS / GREECE
TEL: (+30) 2103428272 - 2103300946, FAX: (+30) 2103302930
E-MAIL: istime@intime.gr www.intime.gr

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Introduction

- ✚ Why do you test? Ask yourself that question right now, and send me your answer via the Q&A panel
- ✚ The next step is to identify two or three non-test colleagues and ask them
- ✚ Usually, the lists don't match
- ✚ Often, non-testers have unrealistic objectives
- ✚ This confusion leads to dissatisfaction with test teams and a perception that testers are failing
- ✚ In the next 45 minutes or so, we'll review a simple process to create clearly defined, achievable, measurable test objectives
- ✚ In addition, this process builds consensus on those objectives within your team and across teams



What's a Test Policy?

- ✚ Describes the “why” of testing
- ✚ Includes the overall test objectives
- ✚ Reflects organizational values and goals
- ✚ Created via a collaborative process involving tests, stakeholders, and other managers
- ✚ Written to help the entire organization, from management down, understand why we test



A Test Policy Document

- Ideally short (1-2 pages)
- Covers:
 - Business value of testing, both tangible and intangible
 - Objectives of testing (e.g., building confidence, detecting defects, generating information, and managing quality risks)
 - Metrics for measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of testing for each objective
 - Stakeholder satisfaction metrics
 - Reasonable goals for each metric
 - Basic test process
 - Metrics-driven, experience-based continuous test process improvement
- Addresses new development and maintenance, large projects and small
- Can reference standard terminology (e.g., company glossary)



A Process for Defining Objectives and Policy

1. Interviews/workshops with stakeholders
2. Draft a list of objectives
3. Review objectives with stakeholders
4. Devise metrics for each objective
5. Baseline current capabilities
6. Create the test policy document
7. Review the test policy with stakeholders, other managers, and executives



Stakeholder Interviews and/ or Workshops

- In interviews or workshops, elicit stakeholders objectives for testing
- Typical objectives include:
 - Find defects, especially important defects
 - Reduce risk to an acceptable level prior to release
 - Build confidence in testing and the software
 - Provide information to make informed decisions throughout the lifecycle
- These objectives can be used as seeds for a brainstorming process, but other objectives can exist



Draft a List of Objectives

- Use the results of the workshops/interviews to create a unified, limited list of realistic, achievable objectives
- For each objective, ask the following questions:
 - What would it mean to be effective in achieving this objective?
 - What would it mean to be efficient in achieving this objective?
 - How should we achieve this objective in a way that is satisfying to stakeholders?
- Answers each question with a short statement
- For example, “As an effective defect finding organization, XYZ test team finds most of the defects present during test execution, and almost all of the important defects”
- Create a short (1-2 pages) document with the objectives and associated answers



Review Objectives with Stakeholders

- Send the document to the stakeholders involved in the workshops and interviews
- Have one or more review meetings with them to get their feedback
- If needed, make changes and re-review
- Once all stakeholders are satisfied, proceed to the next step
- Caution: Political issues can arise if someone feels you haven't adequately addressed their input, so be sure to obtain support of all stakeholders before moving forward



Devise Metrics

- ⊕ Devise metrics for each objective
- ⊕ Address the effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction statements
- ⊕ For example, for defect finding
 - DDE= (test defects)/(test defects+production defects)
- ⊕ DDE should be calculated twice:
 - ▣ Once for all defects
 - ▣ Once for only important defects
- ⊕ DDE for important defects should be higher



Baseline Current Capabilities

- ✚ Baseline current capabilities using the metrics
- ✚ This can involve configuring your test management tool to gather the underlying data
- ✚ Compare measurements against reasonable expectations or industry averages
- ✚ Set targets for the metrics



Create the Test Policy Document

- ✚ Create the test policy document
- ✚ Address:
 - ▣ Objectives
 - ▣ Metrics
 - ▣ Targets
 - ▣ Business value of testing, tangible and intangible (use metrics where possible)
 - ▣ Basic test process
 - ▣ Continuous test process improvement



Review and Finalize the Test Policy

- Review the test policy with the test team
- Incorporate any changes needed based on their feedback
- Review the test policy with the involved stakeholders
- Incorporate changes based on their feedback
- Review the test policy with senior managers and executives across the organization
- Incorporate changes based on their feedback
- Finalize and release the document



Conclusions

- ❖ Confusion often exists about test objectives
- ❖ That's unfortunate, because a simple process can be followed to obtain clear objectives with stakeholder consensus
- ❖ Capturing these in a test policy document creates a short, simple statement of why we test, and how we know that we're doing it well



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Address: RBCS, Inc.
31520 Beck Road
Bulverde, TX 78163-3911
USA

Phone: +1 (830) 438-4830

E-mail: info@rbc-us.com

Web: www.rbc-us.com

Twitter: @RBCS, @LaikaTestDog

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www.rbc-us.com