



Why You Should Consider Software Testing

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I bet this week you used more software than you even know. Did you use a smart phone? Did you ride in a car? Did you play a video game? Did you send an e-mail on your tablet or PC? Did you fly on an airplane? Did you go SCUBA diving? Did you go from one floor to another in an elevator while at the mall? Every one of these activities involves using software. In fact, most of the software used in those activities are more complex and sophisticated than the software used in the Apollo moon mission, and often even more so than the software used by the Space Shuttle.

Did you ever think about how and why all that software works? To some extent, it works because people tested it. People like me. I'm a professional software tester. I run a consulting company that provides software testing services to clients around the world. We help people find better, smarter ways to find and fix bugs in their software before they release it, give other people information to make the right decision about whether to release it, build confidence that software will work properly once it's released, and reduce the risk of software failures after release. Software testing is essential to release higher-quality software products.

What is software testing? Well, basically, it's trying software before it is released to customers and users. Testers want to know if the software gives the right answers and does the right things. Banking applications must accurately track your money. Instagram should upload and display the right images. Testers also want to know if the software behaves properly in other ways, beyond just functionality. Online shopping must be secure so that malicious people – sometimes called hackers – can't steal credit card information or even identities. Massively multiplayer games must reliably and quickly support thousands or even millions of users seamlessly and quickly.

Software isn't always properly tested. Sometimes bugs slip past the project teams that create the software, affecting end users. Sometimes that's just inconvenient, such as when your smart phone crashes. Sometimes it's expensive, such as when banks or online stores get hacked and people steal money. Sometimes it's much more tragic, such as when medical devices, elevators, and other important systems fail. Software quality is so important to the world now, because every aspect of people's lives, from the mundane to the essential, relies on quality software.

We need more people doing better, smarter testing. As I was writing this article, I was on an airplane flying from Amsterdam (where I was working with fellow professional testers) to Kuala Lumpur (where I was visiting a client). Guess what happened? A bug in the entertainment system caused it to crash. It took the poor flight crew 30 minutes –

and interrupted everyone's systems – before they could get it working again. The world needs more software testers, because the world needs better software! If you choose this fascinating and challenging career, you can help make that a reality.