

Leading a Test Team

Best Practices for Excellent Test Organizations



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Introduction

- ❖ In many ways, leading a test team is like leading any other team
- ❖ However, some aspects are specific to managing a test team
- ❖ In this webinar, we'll look at both the general and specific
- ❖ Given a good team, developed carefully, how do you get the best work from them?



Information Sharing and Communication

- ✚ Clearly communicate clearly defined mission, objectives, and goals to the testers
- ✚ Testers can't achieve success unless you help them know what success is
- ✚ Each tester must know specifically how they fit into that success, and who they'll be working with to achieve it
- ✚ Part of leadership is sharing correct, current, and relevant information with your staff



Too Much Information?

- ✦ Sharing information sounds simple, but there is a balance
- ✦ What information is needed, as opposed to irrelevant or distracting?
- ✦ One client's stated policy of over-communication lead to hundreds of emails and instant messages a day
- ✦ The opposite problem can also occur
- ✦ Does a strict need-to-know communication style make sense?
- ✦ I've seen that result in delays and mistakes
- ✦ How to resolve this bind?
 - ❖ Accept that you won't do a perfect job of resolving it
 - ❖ Decide which type of communication problems (TMI vs. mushroom management) you'd rather have



My Preferred Balance

- ❖ I tend to liberally share information
 - ❖ I have a bias toward action
 - ❖ I want my team to share that
- ❖ When you want your team to have a bias toward action
 - ❖ Provide as much information as possible
 - ❖ Don't punish people for well-intentioned mistakes
 - ❖ Instead, find a way to avoid that mistake in the future
- ❖ Find your own balance, consistent with:
 - ❖ The way you manage your team
 - ❖ Your personal management style
- ❖ Remember your team will tend to mirror your own style
 - ❖ If you are open, your team will probably be open with you
 - ❖ If you hold information back, don't be surprised that your team doesn't tell you everything they know



How to Communicate

- ✦ Methods of communication
 - ✦ One-on-one meetings
 - ✦ Weekly status reports
 - ✦ Informal communications (e.g., management by walking around)
- ✦ Go beyond the day-to-day tactical issues
- ✦ Effective communication involves receiving as much as transmitting
- ✦ Be as good at communicating *with* your team as *to* your team
- ✦ Be an active listener
- ✦ Use test management tools to enable good information sharing, too



Fostering Loyalty And Trust

- ❖ My highest compliment: “This project is really badly managed, and I can’t see how it can succeed. I’ve thought many times about quitting...but I know that would leave you in a bad position. I’d walk across fire to avoid creating a problem for you.”
- ❖ Golden rules of promoting loyalty
 - ❖ Don’t ask of your people anything you won’t do yourself – share the pain
 - ❖ Stand by and protect your people
 - ❖ Respect your team
 - ❖ Be open and honest
 - ❖ Make people feel safe and valued
 - ❖ Drive out fear



Team Building

- ✦ A great team is not just loyal to the manager; they are loyal to each other
- ✦ Even the most competent team with the best manager can be rendered ineffectual by internal disputes
- ✦ Create and foster a sense of shared mission via:
 - ✦ Open communication within the team
 - ✦ Mutually respectful behavior
 - ✦ A shared understanding of roles and responsibilities
- ✦ Don't just expect these behaviors: model them



Team Building Activities

- ✚ Group meals
- ✚ Celebratory parties
- ✚ Sharing special events
- ✚ Team newsletters or intranets
- ✚ Educational sessions
- ✚ Professional help
- ✚ Try to be as inclusive as possible
- ✚ Consider organizing cross-functional events



Motivating And Challenging The Test Team

- ❖ Keep in mind that most people
 - ❖ Want to work
 - ❖ Enjoy accomplishing things
 - ❖ Like challenges
 - ❖ Want to learn new skills
 - ❖ Are adequately motivated by a fair salary
- ❖ The main thing to motivation is letting these natural impulses work



Other Motivational Factors

- ⊕ Open communication
- ⊕ Praise publicly, sincerely, and specifically
- ⊕ Criticize privately
 - ⊞ Clearly state the problem
 - ⊞ Objectively present facts
 - ⊞ Consider their side of the story
 - ⊞ Work with them to make improvements
- ⊕ Use job rotations and training to relieve tedium
- ⊕ Skills growth is motivational
- ⊕ Remember, a motivated team has low turnover



Conclusions

- ❖ Leading a test team is challenging, but also rewarding
 - ❖ Share information
 - ❖ Communicate
 - ❖ Foster loyalty
 - ❖ Build team cohesion
 - ❖ Motivate the team
- ❖ Successful test leaders don't just know the behaviors, they model them every day



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