

Testing Best And Worst Practices

What Works and What Doesn't, Part 2



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Introduction

- ❖ And we're back for another look at what works and what doesn't
- ❖ In the first part, I reviewed a little over a dozen best and worst practices
- ❖ In this second part, I'll wind up the series with a similar number
- ❖ I'll also have some closing thoughts on the topic



Clarifying the Term

- ❖ Best practice: a method that generally shows better result than other methods
- ❖ Or: a damn good idea, most of the damn time
- ❖ Best practices can get better over time
- ❖ A few exceptions don't mean it's not a best practices; it's not science, it's management
- ❖ Best practices are not the same as Taylor's "one best way"



Yes, You Will Find Bugs

- ❖ “We’re going to catch a break in system test”
- ❖ No, you won’t
- ❖ It’s an all-too-common testing worst practice to plan a level of testing on the assumption that no defects will be found
- ❖ Instead, use historical project metrics to estimate the number of bugs you expect to find
- ❖ Plan accordingly



Learn by the Study of Mistakes

- ❖ Make interesting new mistakes
- ❖ Study defects found during software development to learn:
 - ❑ How to write better software
 - ❑ How to test better
- ❖ If your team doesn't track defects, you're squandering learning opportunities



It's Not About What You Want

- ❖ Testing occurs to satisfy the needs of other stakeholders
- ❖ In other words, it's a service
- ❖ To deliver a good service, you need to know:
 - ❑ Who your stakeholders are
 - ❑ What their testing and quality objectives are
 - ❑ How you can help them achieve those objectives
- ❖ What you think you should be doing is not the measure of success



Think Beyond Requirements

- ❖ Too many testers think of coverage solely in terms of requirements specifications
- ❖ If you can't think of three other dimensions of test coverage, you haven't thought enough
 - ❖ Quality risks
 - ❖ Supported configurations
 - ❖ User personas
 - ❖ Data types
- ❖ Identify all the important dimensions of test coverage for your product, and don't rely on a single test basis



Two Outsourcing Best Practices

- ❖ Two huge problems with outsourced testing are:
 - ❖ Loss of intellectual capital through attrition and re-assignment
 - ❖ Lack of clear signs of success
- ❖ So, establish:
 - ❖ Clawbacks for turnover
 - ❖ Defined measures of effectiveness and efficiency



Continuous Skills Growth

- ❖ There is no such thing as a perfect test team
- ❖ However, you can strive to continuously perfect your test team
- ❖ Needs change over time
- ❖ Evaluate the critical skills for your test team at least once a year, then re-evaluate your team
- ❖ Put a plan in place to strengthen the key weaknesses



No Such Thing as the One Perfect Tester

- ✦ I often see cookie-cutter tester job descriptions
- ✦ A qualified tester in one situation might be ill-suited for other situations
- ✦ Consider the unique organizational, project, and product attributes your team deals with
- ✦ Create job descriptions and hire accordingly



Hire Into Weaknesses

- ❖ All too often, managers hire people similar to the people already on the team
- ❖ Instead, use hiring opportunities to fill skills gaps
- ❖ Leverage your skills inventory during hiring
- ❖ Know your weaknesses and hire people who are strong there



Only Make Worthwhile Sacrifices

- ❖ Only a screwed-up business culture rewards pointless overtime, weekend work, etc.
- ❖ As a manager, only ask your team to sacrifice for the sake of a project goal if:
 - ❑ The goal has value
 - ❑ You'll sacrifice too
- ❖ If you are pressured to sacrifice for its own sake, it's okay to fake it



Don't Get Ego-involved with Bug Reports

- ❖ Some testers make the mistake of linking their self-esteem to whether “their” bugs get fixed
- ❖ As testers, our job is to provide high-quality information
- ❖ What the organization does with that information is a matter of business decisions
- ❖ Ideally, the organization will use a cross-functional team of product and project stakeholders to manage bugs
- ❖ It's okay to have opinions about which bugs get fixed, but not good to fixate on it



Just Enough Documentation

- ❖ Do you write “shaved gorilla” test documents?
- ❖ If so, why?
- ❖ This is a common result of using templates without careful thought
- ❖ Instead, understand the factors that influence the specific information and level of detail required
- ❖ Give testers guidance on what is needed in each type of document



Conclusions

- ❖ In parts one and two, we looked at two dozen testing best and worst practices
- ❖ These general patterns of success-promoting and success-retarding behaviors are in evidence around the world
- ❖ As a consultant, I get a chance to see these patterns
- ❖ You can apply these patterns to improve your daily work as a tester or test manager



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