Avoiding the Dysfunction

- In addition to cultivating a winning personality, what can we do to avoid these dysfunctions?
  - Know your stakeholders, and vice versa
  - Know what they want
  - Define your mission, and mission success
  - Walk the walk
  - Follow up
- Let's see how this works…

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Know your Stakeholders, and Vice Versa

- What's a stakeholder? Someone with an interest in the testing and quality of the system
- In addition to your direct managers, who are typical test stakeholders?
  - Technical stakeholders: Developers and development managers, database and system architects, technical support
  - Business stakeholders: Marketing staff, business analysts, project managers, sales staff, executives, user documentation staff, users and customers
- Once you've identified a stakeholder group, get to know them
- If you are rehabilitating a "feared enforcer" role, you will have to expend extra effort to reach some stakeholders

Know What They Want

- Talk to stakeholders about their testing and quality objectives
- Typical, achievable objectives include
  - Finding bugs, especially important bugs
  - Building confidence in the system prior to release
  - Producing and delivering useful information to our the project team
  - Reducing risk of production failure
- Stakeholders will typically not be used to thinking about this topic, so be ready to facilitate and guide them
- It's unlikely that any stakeholder will ask you to enforce process on them or prevent them from releasing bad software

What They Want, You Can't Do

- Sometimes stakeholders have unrealistic objectives
  - "Find all the bugs before we ship"
  - "Make sure we never have any regression problems"
- If these stakeholders have felt ignored (or worse) in the past, this position could be a tactic
- If you escalate or go into confrontation mode, you get "clash of the titans" (perhaps a sequel?)
- Instead, take the input, promise to research what you can do, and then come back with a plan

Define Your Mission, and Mission Success

- Based on the input from your stakeholders, define your mission
  - Objectives
  - Metrics to measure achievement of those objectives (effectiveness, efficiency, satisfaction)
  - Targets for those metrics (from baselines and/or benchmarks
- This can be documented in a test policy document
- Circulate the test policy for review, comment, and approval
- Remember that partners collaborate, so be patient in achieving consensus on the mission

Walk the Walk

- With the objectives defined, everything you and your team do should be aligned with those objectives
- If you are getting asked to do things that are not, figure out why
  - Did you miss a stakeholder?
  - Were the objectives actually approved?
  - Was there a misinterpretation of the objectives and/or requirements?
- Since testing is a service function, you must remember to provide a *satisfying* service—being effective and efficient is necessary but not sufficient
- If you or your test team has a history of "feared enforcer" behavior, you have to work extra hard to prove the change is real

Follow Up

- Every few months, go back to your stakeholders for a "how are we doing" evaluation
    - Regular surveys are good
    - Face-to-face communication is important
    - Some groups use regular internal newsletters'
    - Evaluate and act on metrics showing objectives being achieved—or not
- Publicize your successes, but without hubris
- Be ready to take ownership of failures, and fix them
- If you are repairing broken relationships, more attention is needed

Conclusions

- While some have defined testing as a quality cop or process cop role, few organizations actually want or need that

- Instead, focus on understanding and fulfilling stakeholders' real objectives

- With determined, consistent effort, you can transform your role from feared enforcer to trusted partner

To Contact RBCS

For over a dozen years, RBCS has delivered consulting, outsourcing and training services for software and hardware testing. Employing the industry's most experienced and recognized consultants, RBCS conducts product testing, builds and improves testing groups, and hires testing staff for hundreds of clients worldwide. Ranging from Fortune 20 companies to start-ups, RBCS clients save time and money through improved product development, decreased tech support calls, improved corporate reputation and more. To learn more about RBCS, visit www.rbcs-us.com.

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