

Ten Worst Things I Ever Did

Or Saw That Screwed Up a Test Effort



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We've All Done Dumb Things

- ❖ A good way to learn is to avoid doing the dumb things others have done
- ❖ In each of the next 10 slides I'll show
 - ❑ A dumb thing
 - ❑ Why it's dumb
 - ❑ How to avoid it
- ❖ Then we'll talk about how to develop a plan to find dumb things...and make your test team a smart team!



Fall in Love with a Tool

- ❁ At one company, we had an automated tool that allowed us to submit tens of thousands of queries to our system
- ❁ The dumb part was that we under-tested what the tool couldn't test
- ❁ Customers were very angry because some basic parts of the system didn't work
- ❁ So, we added manual testing to cover the missing areas
- ❁ Don't let a test tool dictate coverage



Fail to Fire Someone who Needs Firing

- I once had a very discontented employee
 - She was sure she could do my job (test manager) better
 - She kept doing things that weren't part of the testing job, like debugging with developers and disparaging the rest of the team
 - Her work was of very poor quality in general
- Outside stakeholders saw her as an incompetent troublemaker...and me as a poor leader
- I wasted a lot of energy trying to counsel and correct her, and didn't have time left to guide my more productive team-members
- If someone can't fit within the team as you've defined it, that person needs to be fired



Write Bad Bug Reports

- Many test teams get sloppy here
 - “Test failed”
 - “Blue screen on page 2”
 - “Faster/random”
- People forget that
 - Bug reports are a key deliverable
 - Bug reports have four typical audiences
 - Who are the audiences for your bug reports?
- Work with your bug report stakeholders to improve the quality of your bug reports



Forget You're Providing a Service

- I recently did an assessment where most interviewees said, “The test group adds no value”
 - Testing by itself has no value
 - Testing is only valuable when it connects to something the organization and other stakeholders value
- What are the services you provide, and do the people receiving those services value them?
- Identify your services and their consumers and make them better
- For example, who needs the information in your bug reports?



Ignore a Key Stakeholder

- I once forgot to ask the technical support team how testing was doing
- It turned out they weren't happy with our coverage and the bugs we missed
- So the test team was disbanded!
- Most test groups we assess have ignored at least one key stakeholder
- Make sure you identify all your key stakeholders, and keep in touch with them to assess your performance
- Figure out metrics that will allow you to measure and improve for each stakeholder



Deliver Bad News Badly

- I once told a project manager that the project was in serious trouble due to a huge (~1,000) bug backlog
- I didn't tell him early enough in the project, and I forgot to offer any good solutions to the problem
- I also embarrassed the development manager with my delivery of this news
- Panic early and avoid the rush
- Offer solutions (palatable ones) when you deliver bad news



Fail to Define the Mission

- I once asked stakeholders, “What is my job and how am I doing?”
- Everyone had different ideas...and we see this in assessments all the time
- What do they pay you to do?
 - Filter or shield?
 - Quality assurance or testing?
- If people have different ideas about what your team can do, you can't succeed
- Service organizations (e.g., test groups) must serve defined needs
- Define your mission and then figure out how to best serve that mission





Take Sole Responsibility for Quality

- Oftentimes, the reaction to field failures is, “Why did you miss that?”
- Sometimes, we set ourselves up for that by defining our role as Quality Assurance
- But if all we can do is measure quality at the end of the process, how can we assure it?
- Either we...
 - Get involved early and drive the process to quality or...
 - We determine the level of residual risk at the end of the process and let management decide



Be an Unappointed Process Cop

- When we try to be responsible for quality, sometimes we try to drive process changes upstream without authority
- Yes, well-defined requirements are good
- Yes, unit testing is good
- But do you have the authority (from senior management) to make that happen?
- Identify the pain that the organization feels from bad processes and offer solutions (and help to implement those solutions)



Ignore Bad Expectations

- This is the number one bad thing we do all the time
 - In one assessment, when asked what percentage of bugs a test team should find, a development manager said, “All of them...or at least six sigma!”
- If people expect you to find all the bugs, you can't
- If people expect you to find the important bugs, you can but only:
 - Through risk-based testing
 - If given stable systems to test
 - When builds work on delivery
 - When bug clusters are eliminated
 - When bugs are fixed promptly on discovery
- If people expect you to do what you can't, you fail
- Service organizations that fail get disbanded!



No More Dumb Things

- ❖ Which of these dumb things you are doing now?
- ❖ What other dumb things might you be doing?
- ❖ Benchmark yourself internally (against stakeholder expectations)
- ❖ Benchmark yourself externally (against best practices)
- ❖ Plan for improvement



Identifying the Problems

- Assess your situation
 - Prescriptive models: Testing Maturity Model or Test Process Improvement
 - Non-prescriptive models: Critical Testing Processes or Software Testing and Evaluation Process
- I prefer the non-prescriptive models, because only your stakeholders can say what is really important and the order in which to fix it
- Connect with organizational and stakeholder pain...because that's where people are motivated to solve problems



The Importance of Data in Assessment

- For thousands of years, people believed Aristotle, who said that heavier objects fall faster
- Only when Galileo did his famous experiment did we learn Aristotle was wrong for all those centuries
- What people think is the problem is often not the problem
- What people think is the solution is often not the solution
- People have agendas that blind them to the real situation
- Gather and analyze metrics to find the real pain points...and the solutions



Transforming into a Smarter Test Team

- Now that you understand the pain points and the potential solutions...
 - Put a plan in place to implement the solutions
 - Measure the improvements
 - Communicate the improvements
 - Explain the benefits as you improve
 - Avoid falling back into dumb behaviors!
- Manage the tactics carefully and maximize your strategic benefits to the organization



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