



# Don't have a Defect database yet?

Practical ways to promote testing in your organization.

By **Rob van Steenberg**

I had written on ideas and tips for promoting software testing in an organization in the last issue of **Testing Circus**. One of these was: "Don't have a bug's database yet? Create it yourself; start with an Excel sheet if necessary. A central list of product issues convinces many people of the usefulness of such a tool."

Here, I will explain the above point a little further.

If you don't have a bug database yet at your company, make it yourself. Start a bug database yourself and use (if tooling is not available yet) with an Excel sheet on a central location on your network. A centralized list of issues will help other people see the importance of one central list in comparison to everyone having his own list. Everyone has a list of problems and issues in his mind but the complete picture of all the software problems isn't there yet.

## Benefits of an issue / bugs database

To raise awareness, give a presentation on the benefits of a bug database (or a central list of issues).

- It is an easy way to arrest known bugs within the project
- Everyone has the same view on the issues in a product
- By assigning defects to people (action holders) it creates a to-do list for everyone
- From the bugs database you can generate input for readme files or release notes for new software updates
- It is an analysis tool for testers and developers to find out where the most problems are found, which the most vulnerable part of the software is.

### Creating an Excel sheet

- Use references in your documentation to defect number #0002, #0054, etc from your bug list. Other people in your company will become quickly aware of the central bugs list.
- Use MS Excel to start with, or are you good with MS Access?
- While using MS-Excel or an MS Access database think about this: *Keep it simple to use!*
- Ensure that there is a weekly defect analysis meeting with the project manager, developer, designer and software tester. In this meeting you will discuss the open issues, status, and priority for every issue.

### Keep it simple to use

Keep it simple to use, but at least create the following fields

- Short description: In a clear sentence describing the problem (not the cause)
- Finding number: you will need unique numbers (so you can refer to the defects)
- Status: Open, in progress, fixed, test, solved, closed etc
- Priority: High, Middle or Low? Or 1 (high) to 5 (low)?
- Action Holder: Who needs to do something now
- Date when the defect is found
- Resolved date

### Be the defect manager in your organization

Don't be afraid to play the role of defect manager. Protect the list and keep it updated and realistic.

- If someone has found an issue, ask if he can send you an email with explanation
- Add this defect to your issue list and mail the person back that it can be found "there and there" and that it will be discussed in the next issue meeting



- Do not combine different issues in one. If several issues arrive from one technical cause (which looks often so), it does not mean that solving this technical cause, every problem we thought was related to it, is automatically resolved.

- Engage your colleagues in the issue meetings or discuss issues.

- When an issue database is used for the first time and when a "defect

manager" is speaking about issues and solving them for the first time, some people will not like that, try to stay positive about it.

- Check and discuss issues at the beginning of the project or iteration with the project leader or a change manager. Whoever has the authority and confidence of the team should make sure that people would act upon the issues to analyze and resolve them.
- Be consistent and keep watching and 'guarding' the issues every day.

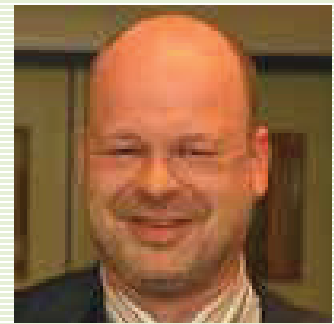
### **Beyond Excel**

You can go really far with an issue reporting tool. Be careful not to make your Excel or MS Access a fully grown application. There are much better defect and issue reporting tools available for free today. If you get to the point that everyone in your team is using the issue list and follows the issue process, it is time to search for a good defect reporting tool for your organization.

For implementing the tools that are available on the Internet you'll need some help from some technical colleagues. Maybe you can ask a programmer if he can search for and analyze some tools and compare them and let you know what they recommend. Free tools still cost a lot of money if they do not fit in the organization.

When looking for these tools, check for example: <http://www.software-pointers.com/en-defecttracking-tools.html> . Here you will find many free tools. Bugzilla for instance is free and is widely used in the world.

Remember, it is your team that should be ready for the tool, not you alone. First find out what people think rather than what you would like to do.



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In the next issue – Rob will write more on how to promote testing in an organization. Keep reading **Testing Circus**. - Editor