

How to promote Testing in Your Organization



Testing Circus Regular Feature

- Rob van Steenberg

Test Promotion Tip - 8

Telling People About the Benefits of Starting Testing Early

Part 2

In the previous part of this article I had discussed that starting early with testing in a project is something that must be done. I explained about doing product risk analyses and helping the project manager with his quality plan. Such a plan covers a lot of subjects we as testers can help. Some remaining ideas where you can help are described in this part and this article will continue with research, reviews and end with a summary that could help you in discussions about starting early with testing.

Subjects of the quality plan

Applicable standards

Standards can be calculated in beforehand and become part of the focus of the team, so it is very wise to include this in a quality plan beforehand. It is also a focus area for a test trajectory and you will need information from these standards (or regulations) when you are executing tests.

Quality control and audit processes

Instead of placing your test processes in your test plan, it can be put in the quality plan. It is mixed then with the overall quality processes.

Change management procedures

I could imagine a defect procedure would fit in this part of the quality plan.

Getting to know the domain and researching the product to be made

When you test, it helps to know the domain where you are testing. The sooner you will work on getting to know the domain for testing, the sooner you can ask relevant questions about the new system that has to be created. One of the main tasks

of a tester is “asking questions”. So the sooner you can start, the sooner your questions will be more relevant too. And asking questions is also raising awareness with the people that try to answer them.



Doing reviews of documentation

Writing and reviewing documentation is a boring task for a lot of people in the IT. And reviewing documentation is done by sending it to a colleague. Waiting for review remarks and if you don't get them, well.... Then the documentation is OK. Right?

As a tester you know that good documentation (to the point, unambiguous, not too many irrelevant information, use of graphics and pictures, flows) is needed for not only testing but people will use documentation as a reference for building software, supporting software, writing manuals and even set expectations with the customer for the system to be build. So documentation should be at least telling the truth and help with all these tasks.

Sometimes documentation is iteratively written; sometimes people try to do documentation for a complete system in *one* day. Well, the better the

reviews by other disciplines, the better the picture becomes for all team members. And the better the documentation becomes on paper and in the minds of the people doing the work.

So helping with doing reviews is a task the tester should be helping with. You could make sure the right people are reviewing the documentation. Did someone forget to include a support engineer or an architect or the customer?

Also getting together in a room and doing a review session helps a lot to create the understanding and make better documentation. Defects that would be in the software later are already fixed on paper. This is a relatively cheaper way of getting quality in products. Be aware a project manager could think a session with eight team members for two hours would be expensive. It would be your task to explain that getting ten defects out of the documentation would save production time of eight members for a week at the end, or even more.

To summarize

We can do a lot at the beginning of a project in testing, although project managers and organizations do not see this as testing. As it is a part of our testing job, we should recognize these things and explain that this is testing, but not done on products that are already running in a test environment.

Why should you start testing as early as possible?

- Getting the team in the mindset of product risks. If everybody knows the risks, a lot of risks won't even arise later in the project
- Translate customer quality expectations to get an early focus on quality attributes
- We want to have Specific, Measurable acceptance criteria and define them as risks for further focus on important areas

- Get some test plan chapters in the high level quality plan, which will be read by more stakeholders than people reading the test plan
- Getting information about the product, competitors and the domain early, so that you could be efficient in test execution and wake up other stakeholders by asking questions
- Getting the best out of documentation, so less errors will be in the documents that will cost a lot more later on

By doing this, the other project team members will be more focused on quality and be aware more of testing. With this you get testing as a team focus and not only the tester at the end.



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In the last five years he has been involved in infrastructure projects and is now working at the Dutch company Nobel as a test manager. He is working in miscellaneous projects for customers of this company and coaching and helping project managers and technical colleagues with setting up and improving test processes internally.

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