Critical Testing Processes
Stranger in a Strange Land
Lost in Translation
NLP for Testers
Platform Specific Risk Based Tests
Testing Maturity Model
Testers for Testers roles
The People Aspect of Test Management

NEXT CONFERENCE
The Passion of Testing
Incorporating the SIGiST AGM
Friday 18 June 2004

FUTURE SIGiST CONFERENCES
Wednesday 22 September 2004
Tuesday 7 December 2004
FROM THE EDITOR

Everyone I spoke to at the March conference said how much they were enjoying their day. The quality of the presentations, as ever, was very high and Isabel Evans was presented with the SIGiST Best Presentation 2003 Award. By coincidence she was the Featured Speaker for the day and exhibited the reasons why she is such a popular speaker – right down to the little dance which amused us all. Sorry, you had to be there to know what I’m talking about!!

I hope that you are one of the over 15,000 candidates who have sat the ISEB Foundation Certificate in Software Testing. It is now an expected accreditation by most companies, however experienced you are. There are lots of training courses available, or you can just sit the exam although the pass rate is much lower. For more information, please visit www.bcs.org.uk/iseb. There have now been over 500 candidates for the Practitioner exam and the Foundation Certificate is a pre-requisite for this.

At the March conference Andy Redwood outlined the future of software testing certification. There now exists the International Software Testing Qualifications Board (ISTQB), the mission of which is to provide ‘uniformity and compatibility of the teaching and exam content’ for all countries involved. See www.istqb.org to find out more about how the exams are going to be internationally recognised.

Please book now for the June conference to keep up to date!

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SIGiST Standards Working Party: www.testingstandards.co.uk

BCS SIGiST – THE PASSION OF TESTING
Friday 18 June 2004 – London Marriott Hotel, Grosvenor Square, London W1

08:30 Coffee & Registration, Exhibition opens
09:00 SIGiST AGM (see website for agenda and details)
09:25 Introduction and Welcome – Philip Trickey, Chair
09:30 Featured Speaker
Critical Testing Processes: Plan, Prepare, Perform, Perfect
Rex Black, RBCS Inc.
10:15 Featured Speaker
Lost in Translation
Colin Cherry, Global Testing Services Pty Ltd.
10:55 Coffee & opportunity to visit the exhibition
11:20 NLP for Testers (a brief introduction)
Alan Richardson,
Compendium Developments
12:00 TBA
12:40 Networking session and commercial break
13:00 Lunch & opportunity to visit the exhibition
14:00 Birds of a Feather
and Table Talks
(see below and page 4 for choices)
15:00 Tea & opportunity to visit the exhibition
15:30 Book Review
15:40 Platform Specific Risk Based Tests
George Wilkinson, NDS Ltd.
16:10 Featured Speaker
Stranger in a Strange Land
Rex Black, RBCS Inc.
16:55 Closing Remarks

Special Session 1
Testing Maturity Model: An Introduction to Step-Wise Assessments
Brian Wells, Tesnet Group
Andrew Goslin, Marks & Spencer
Advance booking required, see below. Please tick the relevant box on the registration form.

Special Session 2
Mastering Your Domain
Rex Black, RBCS Inc.
Advance booking required, see below. Please tick the relevant box on the registration form.

The SIGiST committee reserves the right to amend the programme if circumstances deem it necessary.

Table Talks
At a Table Talk a topic is presented by an expert to a small audience seated around a table (each table will be limited to a maximum of 10 people). This is like the Birds of a Feather groups but here one person will be doing most of the talking. The format and content of each Table Talk will be left to the individual giving the talk but it is expected to be informal.

Choose from the topics listed below (please indicate your first and second choices of these topics on your registration form).

1. Influencing management with project intelligence, Paul Gerrard, Systeme Evolutif
2. How to build, motivate and retain effective test teams, Lloyd Roden, Grove Consultants
3. Bugs & bug reporting, John Watkins, IBM Software Group
4. Outsourcing, Susan Windsor, IBM
5. An introduction to test techniques, Stuart Reid, Cranfield University
6. Influencing managers: cost & time scales, Fergus McLachlan, Aqua Computing
Abstracts: The Passion of Testing

Rex Black
RBCS Inc.

Author: “Managing the Testing Process” and “Critical Testing Processes”

Critical Testing Processes: Plan, Prepare, Perform, Perfect

Abstract: Users, customers, and stakeholders want systems that provide the needed functions, delivered on time and for a reasonable price. They also want quality systems that work correctly, reliably, securely, and quickly.

Everybody knows that to deliver quality systems, solid testing is a must, right? If everyone knows that, then why did a recent study by the US National Institute of Standards and Technology estimate that inadequate testing cost the US economy $60 billion?

In his new book, Critical Testing Processes, Rex Black identifies twelve processes that testers, test managers, and development organizations must master to go from knowing they need solid testing to actually doing solid testing. In this talk, Rex will summarize the key ideas of the book for you and give you some ideas and tools you can put to work on your next day back in the office.

Rex will show you why testing matters, in dollars, euros, pounds, or whatever currency you use. Far beyond a hypothetical discussion of how bugs are cheaper when fixed earlier, Rex will show you a real case study from a real project.

Workshop: Mastering Your Domain: When Factors Collide

Abstract: Sure, boundary value analysis and equivalence class partitioning are useful techniques. But what do you do when you are dealing with many, many factors or fields that interact and influence each other’s values?

For example, if you have ten integer input fields from that accept a number from 0 to 99, you have four boundary values for each field. The illegal values are easy, because we only have 20 tests for those. However, to test each legal combination of fields, you have 1,024 test cases. But do you need to do so? And would testing combinations of boundary values necessarily make for good tests? Are there smarter options for dealing with such combinatorial explosions?

In this workshop, Rex Black will lead you through an alternative technique called domain analysis. The workshop will include the theory, the terminology, examples, and a group exercise.

Domain analysis is an effective and efficient test technique for complex situations.

In this workshop, Rex will cut through the jargon and complexity. You’ll end the hour ready to add another useful and powerful test technique to your tester’s toolbox.

Stranger in a Strange Land

The Test Professional in the Outsourced Project

Abstract: More and more test professionals work on projects where some or all of the development is done by third-parties, often overseas. While cost savings make such arrangements attractive to executives, individual contributors and managers on such projects face some significant challenges. What does outsource mean for testers?

In this keynote speech, Rex Black offers insights from his extensive involvement in outsource projects – both successful and not-so-successful.

• What are the challenges involved?
• What critical logistical issues must we address to succeed?
• Should companies outsource the testing as well as the development?
• What does a company’s adherence to good processes – perhaps though certified ISO 9000 or CMM compliance – mean for test professionals?
• Does certification of the outsource firm’s staff matter?
• How can we mitigate risks?
• How can people focus on the important matters and not get lost in minutiae?
• How does outsourcing affect system development lifecycles?
• On international projects, how can knowing the culture help reduce the risk of project failure?

Colin Cherry
Global Consulting Services Pty Ltd.

Lost in Translation

Abstract: I work on major projects, you know, the ones that cost millions and impact large numbers of customers and employees. The ones where we integrate a myriad of systems, convert a large customer and account database onto new software and then roll out the solution to 12,000 branches worldwide. If we ever have a problem on these major projects it’s always the same one - communication.

What I learnt from a very early stage was that most of what we produce isn’t read or understood, so I set about developing an approach that ensured that anyone who was interested in what we do could at least get an inkling of what we are up to and how we are progressing.

I use pictures - lots of pictures. I don’t write large documents or long reports. I provide concise and (hopefully) clear messages that keep people informed and up to date.

This presentation will provide some useful tips about communicating what we do. This will not be “death by Powerpoint” either but a concise and colourful presentation that you’ll be able to use back at the office.

Alan Richardson
Compendium Developments

NLP for Testers (a brief introduction)

Abstract: The ‘Meta Model’ is a simple to understand, and incredibly powerful, model of the communication used by psychotherapists, which is also enormously practical for testers. This presentation will provide an overview of the 10 communication violations identified by the ‘Meta Model’ and how testers can apply them. The presentation will also provide an introduction to Neuro-Linguistic Programming™ (NLP™), the branch of psychotherapy that constructed the model.

NLP is defined as “the study of the structure of subjective experience and what can be calculated from that”. Back in the ‘70s, the developers of NLP studied the most effective psychotherapists that they could find, to identify how those psychotherapists were able to achieve amazing results with their clients. NLP makes accessible the techniques of psychoanalytical luminaries such as Virginia Satir, Milton Erickson, Frank Farrelly and Fritz Perls.

The initial study of these therapists resulted in a model of language and communication called the ‘Meta Model’: the questions (or challenges) that therapists used and the client responses that resulted from, or led to, those questions being asked.

The Meta Model provides testers with a simple model of 10 communication violations that can be applied to software development documentation and help identify ambiguity, missing information, distortion, and potential defects. Testers can apply the model to their own documentation to communicate more effectively with project staff outside the test team.
The 10 violations identified by the Meta Model provide a useful framework for thinking about the context of testing. As well as providing an overview of the application of the Meta Model to testing, this presentation will provide a number of tips for learning more about NLP and applying what you are learning.

George Wilkinson
NDS Ltd.
Platform Specific Risk Based Tests

Abstract: At the end of 2002, businesses remained steady within NDS, but a lot more business was about to come our way. As a result of this extra business and customer pressure, we had to re-think our testing strategy. We were suffering from one major issue - we were testing on multiple platforms with a generic test approach. This talk introduces a process that was devised to make the test selection of our test approach to multiple platforms more risk based; and to lay the foundations for platform specific tests.

Brian Wells
Tesnet Group

Andrew Goslin
Marks & Spencer

Testing Maturity Model: An Introduction to Step-Wise Assessments

About TMM

The Capability Maturity Model (CMM) is often regarded as the industry standard for software process improvement. Despite the fact that testing often accounts for 30-40% of the total project costs, only limited attention is given to testing in the various Software Process Improvement models. The testing community has created a complementary improvement model: Test Maturity Model (TMM).

Just like the CMM, the TMM also uses the concept of maturity levels for process evaluation and improvement. Furthermore process areas, maturity goals and key practices are identified.

The TMM consists of 5 maturity levels. For each maturity level, a number of Maturity Goals/key process areas are defined. A key process area is a cluster of related activities within the test process, e.g. test planning or test training. When these activities are performed adequately, they will contribute to an improved test process which, support an organisation to determine the maturity of its test process and to identify the next improvement steps that are necessary to achieve a higher level of test maturity.

The TMM Workshop

Marks and Spencer identified the need to be able to evaluate the testing process within

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The title sounds like a political slogan doesn’t it? A short sound-byte that is appropriate to both placards and enthusiastic chanting. For an audience of testers, it seems unnecessary to give the message. But it is both apt and timely. This article outlines the rallying call that “testers” jobs should be given to testers; that is individuals who are primarily proficient at testing.

The ICT job market has changed dramatically in the last 5 years. There are significant numbers of both permanent and contract staff unemployed, under-employed, or ill employed, some scanning vacancies as soon as they are posted. Depending upon who you listen to, there may have been as many as 80% of contract staff in the computer industry out of contract early in 2003. The reasons for this have been well documented, and whilst you may not necessarily agree with all of them, there is little point going over the same ground again. All we need to know is that there are many really good people out there who are not working. The testing community is not immune to these forces, although there are signs that more testing vacancies are being advertised.

Scan the job pages, or some of the specialist IT job sites that are available on the Internet. For a “testing” position, what qualities are being asked for? Very often, the hardware, software, business knowledge, and development background are featured prominently. I do not wish to belittle any of these attributes, but sometimes, the ability to TEST is given less prominence than the collective importance of the fabled four just mentioned. These are important, but surely the ability to test has to be pre-eminent.

Many applicants have to get through two or more levels of pre-selection before getting to an interview. If you want testers, then make sure you ask for them, and ask for them by experience or qualification. Some organisations will not even interview an external candidate for a testing position unless they have obtained the ISEB Foundation Certificate in Software Testing. If you ask for this, get some proof that the individual has indeed obtained it; having asked a candidate to bring his certificate to the interview, I knew a test manager who suddenly found the tester could not make the appointment!

Both permanent and contract vacancies can be handled by an external agency. The organisation will only provide candidates that match the stated requirements. So, do you want an ex-developer who has C++, and Visual Basic (version 6 or higher), who can test? Or are you requiring a software tester (exposure to C++ and VB a bonus)? There is a big difference. Applicants have to pass both through the agency, and through the HR department, before even reaching anyone in the IT division (where they may be vetted by the development manager first). If the job agency does not provide candidates that meet the job specification, they will soon cease to be on the “preferred supplier” list. The firm will provide what they are asked for.

I am a tester. I TRY to make a virtue of my varied business background. If someone is asking for a tester, then I am your man. What makes it hard is when someone between the Test Manager and the agency “interprets” the requirements, so that the testing element is less prominent. Do you want a tester? Then ask for one, and don’t let company internal politics, or the vagrancies of the HR department, water-down the testing element.

If you are seeking an airline pilot, knowledge of the geography of UK airports is not the deciding factor, is it? [If it is, then perhaps I need to change the companies that I fly with!]

Peter Morgan is a freelance tester. He can be contacted by e-mail at morganp@supanet.com
As the span of control for testing projects grows and we operate within a multi-site (and even multi-geography) environment, how can you as a manager ensure your staff are fully aware of your strategic goals and what the opportunities are for them as individuals?

This is a constant challenge and just as important as the testing skills we need, to stay effective and competitive in today’s market. Last year, I took a look at this aspect of management within my own organisation (IBM) and learnt some interesting lessons. I now hope my experience can be useful to you, whether as a manager or as a tester.

Firstly, lets take a closer look at some specific management challenges I faced - how many of them also relate to you?

Remote management – all operational meetings are held via conference call now rather than face to face. We all therefore miss out on the visual aspects of communication.

Mobile working – location is now driven by assignment, so for most of us it’s weeks or months between visits to our IBM base. Much of our internal electronic communication is via our Intranet, so many people miss out on this and can feel “disconnected” as a result.

Multiple skills, knowledge and experience – as we provide testing services across the entire life-cycle, we’ve got many different types of testers. Plus, assignments vary in size from one person for 2-3 weeks to teams of 100 plus testers that run for two years, so the level of experience in our Test Managers varies considerably. So, there isn’t a single community to manage!

Multiple delivery models – although much of our work is delivered via teams working on customer sites, we’re moving towards delivering services using IBM Service Centres, in the UK and Globally. These different delivery models require different management and support infrastructures.

Communication, communication, and communication – in my experience you never win with communication, but that doesn’t mean you don’t have to keep trying to get it right. People absorb information in different ways and you need to use all methods (written, verbal, visual and auditory) to ensure everyone is up to the same level of understanding.

Sharing information and assets – this is essential to maintain competitive edge. Without this, we will invent new methods of working in pockets that no one else can benefit from.

“Worrying” market trends – the general business climate gives some testers cause for concern. The cost reduction pressure in the industry is taking more and more work offshore, so is there a future career in testing in the UK? The UK testing market generally been very tough for the last couple of years, is it going to ever recover? Most organisations have shrunk their staff numbers over the last couple of years, am I going to be next?

So, I had a community of testers, all working extremely hard, finding it difficult to meet up and share experiences as they’d done in the past because of tight cost controls. Although the general business climate was starting to improve, this message wasn’t getting through via all the normal communication channels. IBM is an extremely well structured and mature organisation, and so the existing channels to support staff are extensive and I’ll summarise them below. However, I felt this wasn’t enough to meet this management challenge.

Every tester has a Manager who helps with career goals, training and development plans. Our Resource Manager provides assignment opportunities based upon our strategic business goals. Balancing personal and business goals is always a challenge, but this system is both fair and effective.

We have extensive technology support. Our Intranet is a vast source of valuable information and it’s supplemented by Testing Team-Rooms where Methods and Assets are stored for reference and re-use. Plus we are very heavy users of electronic communications, both email and an internal product called Same Time (a bit like MSN Messenger).

We do a quarterly newsletter that gives information on market direction, updates on the assignment opportunities, feedback from projects, updates on revisions to methods and procedures, customer feedback and information about what’s happening inside IBM.

So, even with all this operational support, vast amounts of information available, and existing communication, I still had a problem. When I talked to our staff, it was clear that many people knew little of what was happening within the Test Community, all wanted to know more, but simply didn’t have the time to go and find out. We were pushing the business hard, we’d reorganised people into a structure they didn’t understand. Bottom line - we weren’t investing enough in our people.

Historically we’d had an annual Testing Conference to share information and improve personal networks, and this hadn’t happened for two years now. So, I devised a plan for a Road Show, based on the principle that if I couldn’t get everyone together, I’d take our leadership team to them. I had three key objectives:

• Provide information on the topics that mattered to the staff
• Share a common vision of market trends and where we were going
• Allow time for some social networking

Rather than visibly run this myself, I asked the Test Community Leader to take the lead, as he is one of the staff he understands the issues.

Getting contributions from the staff of what they wanted to know about was a risk. They could have decided to contribute nothing, which would have sealed the fate of the event. We started by using our network to get word out that we really did want input, and followed this up with a short questionnaire. We had a great response of ideas for content, which we used to construct the agenda.

• What can the Test Community do for you?
• Where is the market going and what does this mean for you and your career?
• What is the future plan for Rewards, Recognition and Career Development?
• How are we meeting the challenge of finding testers with the right skills?
• What assignment opportunities are coming up?
• What can you learn from other projects?
• Question & Answer session
• Networking session – with refreshments
Other important aspects included:
• All presentations to be less than 20 minutes
• Every question raised by staff was included in the content
• The event was timed to be part private and part business hours
• Geographic locations convenient for the staff
• I would attend every event, most people knew little about me as I’d only been Test Practice leader for a year
• Capture of staff perceptions before and after the event
Overall the event proved to be an extremely valuable management tool. We captured information on:
• A list of topics for concern or clarification
• What people felt was missing from their knowledge or role
• How people liked to receive communication
• What worked well and could be improved from the event itself
We set ourselves a very high attendance target of 80% and, although those who registered interest was far higher than this, the actual attendance was in the order of 50%, with people dropping out because of work pressures.
We achieved 90.5% satisfaction on the overall value of the event and 98% satisfaction with the presentation content. Everyone was hungry for information and the planning ensured we got the content in line with the need. Everyone got some value out of attending and we got some very constructive feedback on how to improve as a management team. In particular, the information we gained about how our testers like to be communicated with will be extremely valuable in the future and wasn’t entirely what I’d expected! The following shows peoples preferred communication method.

Face to face: Only 15% of testers had this as their preference, this was initially a surprise to me, but upon reflection, we typically gain information from using systems and reading documents.
Team Room: At 22% this was a very popular method of communication. This in an IBM Intranet facility but equates to the discussion/information forums you can find on the Internet.
Newsletters: Although this was 21%, I believe this was as a result of testers saying what they thought we wanted to hear rather than because they really value this.
Presentations: Only 3% of testers value this communication forum, a lesson for all managers!
EMAIL: An overwhelming 29% had this as a preference and it clearly an important part of our working lives
Mail Shots: In this context, this refers to long email communication that are regularly sent out by senior management to all staff and only 1% of testers value this form of communication.
Round Table: At IBM we frequently host events where senior managers select a cross section of staff and host a discussion, typically lasting about an hour. Although this can be very effective, it’s sometimes used purely to get key messages across and therefore only received 2% in this feedback.
Other: This attracted a 3% preference, which solely related to our Same Time tool. In multi-site projects I know this communication method would receive a much higher percentage, taking over from email as a preferred method.

So, what is the generic value of this experience? I believe that the benefit of operating as a team far exceeds operating as individuals, and remote distributed teams don’t remain teams without management investment. A key lesson for me was that email and newsletters won’t do this job for you and because a service is only as good as the people who deliver it, investing in people is paramount.
The most frequent quote I’ve heard since the event has been “at least our management care about the staff”. In addition, I get emails and phone calls from a much wider group of people who feel more comfortable approaching me for advice and guidance. I also get more leads for business, contacts for people to join test, and names of contractors who have proven their worth on projects. Although I’ve not quantified this business value, I know that it’s certainly there.
If you’re a manager, I’d recommend that you find out how your own staff prefer to be communicated with and build an appropriate communicates plan, visit your teams when you can and be bold and adventurous in trying out your ideas.
If you’re a tester, make sure you extend your personal network - you never know when it will come in useful. Ensure you give constructive feedback to your manager, ask questions and make sure your manager knows what information you’d find valuable. Communication is two-way so you need to invest in it too.
Finally, would I do it again? Absolutely!

It was a lot of work to organise but the immediate benefits have been extremely worthwhile. The feedback I’ve gained has given me more ideas too, which I’ll be building into our own communications plan for 2004. In particular, Master Classes to debate our latest thinking, Lunch and Learn to transfer knowledge and skills and more Road Shows, probably with a wider audience to include different specialist skill groups.
People are our greatest asset; lets all do our bit to ensure our working life is as enjoyable as possible.

Susan Windsor
**PERSONAL DETAILS**

You may register by

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**Registration Form**

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**CANCELLATIONS**

Cancellations must be received in writing prior to 11 June to qualify for refund of fees (less £10.00 administration charge). No-shows are liable for the full cost of fees. Substitutions may be accepted at any time.

**VEGETARIAN MEALS/SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS**

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The meeting is worth 5 hours CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

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**SPECIAL SESSIONS**

Please indicate with a tick, one parallel session for each time slot (see programme for further details):

- 11.20  - Brian Wells or Alan Richardson & TBA
- 14.00  - Rex Black or Birds of a Feather 1.___________ 2.___________ or Table Talks 1.___________ 2.___________

**FEES**

Including morning coffees, afternoon refreshments, luncheon, full set of presentation materials, and entry into the tools and services exhibition.

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