

The Quality Mark

Spring 2004

BIGGEST ISSUE EVER!

THE QUARTERLY KWSQA NEWSLETTER
Vol iii, issue 3

KWSQA Calendar Of Events

March 31, 2004

Topic
Certification

Speaker
Panel Discussion on
Certification

April 28, 2004

Topic
Breaking Software for
Fun and Profit

Speaker
Michael Bolton

May 26, 2004

Topic
Don't Test

Speaker
Neil Price-Jones

Monthly

The KWSQA members meet on the last Wednesday of each month. If you are interested in attending please contact Don Hewitt at

info@kwsqa.org

Interview with James Bach By Rob Bowyer

We don't often get to meet a bona fide testing guru in this neck of the woods often, so when I had the chance to interview James Back, I jumped at it.

As I mentioned in a previous TQM article, I had the opportunity to meet with James Bach recently. If you are not familiar with him, Mr. Bach is the co-author of "Lessons learned in software testing" as well as several other titles.

With several years in software testing and software testing management experience under his belt, he has moved into the consulting arena.

TQM: What is the number one challenge facing QA professionals today?

JB: Figuring out how to be relevant in a world under tremendous time and cost pressure, and how to earn the respect that we desire.

The agile development movement is challenging the idea that traditional QA matters. So, I think QA better get more agile or what remains of it that doesn't get taken over by developers will be outsourced to India.

TQM: What does the future of QA look like to you?

JB: A lot more offshore outsourcing is going to happen, because QA/Testing is perceived as clerical work rather than highly skilled labour. Agile development will continue to grow, because it works. The future of expensive test tools is in doubt, as companies begin to wake up and realize that most of them, most of the time, aren't worth the money.

I'm pleased that the agile and intellectual approach to test methodology I've been working on and championing for so long seems to be taking off. I've been working

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"The future of expensive test tools is in doubt, as companies begin to wake up and realize that most of them, most of the time, aren't worth the money."

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Worth quoting:

I think computer viruses should count as life. I think it says something about human nature that the only form of life we have created so far is purely destructive. We've created life in our own image.

Stephen Hawking (1942 -)

Software Quality Assurance HOT TOPIC



Agile

By Adrienne Farrell

Agile methods and philosophies – including Agile development and testing – are currently being actively discussed and debated in many software development circles. Also under discussion are the many practices associated with the Agile movement including Scrum, eXtreme programming, FDD (Feature driven development), ASD (Adaptive Software Development) and Crystal. Agile is now being applied to many different areas such as “Agile communication” and “Agile management”.

The general Agile tenets are as follows:

- We must be flexible, adaptable, and welcome change.
- Collective ownership of software and full stakeholder participation is essential. This includes strong customer collaboration, as the top priority is to satisfy the customer.
- The basic practices followed should be incremental design, continuous integration, test driven development, and frequent releases.
- The development process of plan, design and build is replaced by a process of speculate, collaborate, and learn.

A basic summary of Agile is provided in the Agile Manifesto (<http://www.agilemanifesto.org>), which describes Agile software development as follows:

“We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work we have come to value:

- **Individuals and interactions** over processes and tools
- **Working software** over comprehensive documentation
- **Customer collaboration** over contract negotiation
- **Responding to change** over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.”

Many of those who endorse Agile methods argue that current approaches and/or “best practices” are illusory and impractical in the “real world”. Those who criticize Agile state that as a methodology it is simply an excuse to abandon discipline and planning and revert to “cowboy” style development.

The following are some general resources if you wish to read more about Agile methods:

- Agile discussion list available through yahoo groups.
 - o Subscribe by sending mail to: agile-testing-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.
 - o Warning: This list is quite heavy in traffic.

Web sites:

- o Search for “Agile” at <http://www.stickyminds.com>
- o Brian Marick’s Agile Testing page at: <http://www.testing.com/agile/>
- o The “Agile Alliance” home page at: <http://www.agilealliance.org/home>
- o Martin Fowler’s “New Methodology” article: <http://martinfowler.com/articles/newMethodology.html>
- o Jim Highsmith’s article “What is Agile Software Development?”: http://www.adaptivesd.com/articles/cross_oct02.pdf

Books and articles:

- o Alistair Cockburn, Agile Software Development. Addison-Wesley, 2001
- o Kent Beck, Extreme Programming Explained: Embrace Change. Addison-Wesley, 1999.
- o Jim Highsmith. Agile Software Development Ecosystems. Addison-Wesley.
- o Ken Schwaber and Mike Beedle. Agile Software Development with Scrum. Prentice

The Quality Mark

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For more information about The Quality Mark and the KWSQA please visit our website:

www.kwsqa.org

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Contributors Wanted!

Do you have a Software Testing book that you’d like to tell the testing community about?

Maybe you’ve always wanted to try your hand at writing an article.

Then contribute to The Quality Mark

For more information on how you can become involved contact Rob:

news@kwsqa.org

Interview with James Bach Continued

The KWSQA Contact Information

Please feel free to drop us an email with any questions you may have about KWSQA

Here is a contact list to help you get in touch with us.

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www.yahogroups.com

with Dr. Cem Kaner at Florida Tech to produce a systematic and comprehensive approach to training skilled exploratory testers. We think we've achieved that, now we need to figure out how to systematically train trainers, which is much more difficult.

I think, in 20 years, degreed technology testers, expert in context-driven test methodology, martial artists of critical thinking, will be commonplace.

TQM: Do you feel that Software quality assurance will ever reach the same level of organization as in the manufacturing sector?

JB: I don't know how SQA can usefully be compared with QA in the manufacturing world. The dynamics of software quality are more comparable to the design and developmental testing of manufactured items-- not what happens on an assembly line.

Manufacturing QA is about reproducing something. Software QA is about getting the *first one* to work. Geez, if all I had to do in testing was reproduce for the 5,000th time a simple test procedure I had designed only once, I would be pretty organized, too.

TQM: What are your thoughts on certification (for example the ASQ's CSQE)?

JB: I worked on the ASQ CSQE program. I don't endorse it. I don't think any of the testing/QA certifications that currently exist are very useful or good for the industry. I have no more reason to believe someone is competent if they're certified than if they aren't, because there are no skill-based certification programs.

I'm far more impressed if someone has a degree in epistemology, or law, or has scientific research experience. I also expect more from graduates of Florida Tech, because they have a great tester program there.

TQM: What are the best career advancement steps for someone who is a junior to intermediate QA professional?

JB: If you want your career to move into programming, study programming.
If you want your career to move into management, read everything by Jerry Weinberg.
If you want to be the best tester in the world, read everything by Jerry Weinberg.
If you want to do what I do, read Weinberg.

On second thought, read Weinberg if you want to be a programmer, too.

Where a calculator on the ENIAC is equipped with 18,000 vacuum tubes and weighs 30 tons, computers in the future may have only 1,000 vacuum tubes and perhaps weigh 1.5 tons.

unknown, Popular Mechanics, March 1949



Check Us Out Online!
www.kwsqa.org

membership info, speaker presentations
meet the executive, contact info, club pictures
upcoming meeting details, extra resources
archived TQMs, and more being added every month!

"I don't know how SQA can usefully be compared with QA in the manufacturing world."

Quantum Theory of Socks

Philosophers have long wondered why socks have this habit of getting lost, and why humans always end up with large collections of unmatched odd socks. One school of thought says that socks are very anti-social creatures, and have a deep sense of rivalry. In particular, two socks of the same design have feelings of loathing towards each other and hence it is nearly impossible to pair them (e.g. a blue sock will usually be found nestling up to a black one, rather than its fellow blue sock).

On the other hand, quantum theorists explain it all by a generalised exclusion principle--it is impossible for two socks to be in the same eigen-state, and when it's in danger of happening, one of the socks has to vanish. Indeed the Uncertainty Principle also comes in--the only time you know where a sock is, is when you're wearing it, and hence unable to be sure exactly how fast it's moving. The moment you stop moving and look at your sock, it then starts falling to pieces, changing colour, or otherwise becoming indeterminate. Either way, socks may possess Colour and Strangeness, but they seem to lack Charm.

Source: Internet

What's your favourite Star Trek character and why?

Captain Kirk - "Get a life..."

If you could change one thing about QA or Software Development what would it be?

That's tough. That'd involve modifying some Dilbert principles.

What's the most interesting thing on your desk?

My Grundig Porsche Edition Shortwave radio? I don't live here...

What would you like to see in the next issue of TQM?

Don't really know.

Member: Heather Green

How many years have you been in QA?

2 years, 8 months

How did you get into QA?

Became interested while learning about it from friends in the industry

What did you really want to do career wise?

Something in Healthcare, i.e. medicine, nursing

How long have you been a member of the KWSQA?

This is my first year.

Why did you join KWSQA?

To learn more about software quality and meet others in the field.

What's your favorite Star Trek character and why?

Not a Star Trek fan, so no favorite.

If you could change one thing about QA or Software Development what would it be?

Though I have seen many improvements I would still like to see a better relationship between development and testers.

What's the most interesting thing on your desk?

My new cell phone propped up on its stand. People always want to look at it and check out what's holding it up!

What would you like to see in the next issue of TQM?

Maybe some links to useful Software Quality/QA sites in the area. Maybe even an article or links to articles on surviving layoffs, what to do if you are in that situation etc.



Haven't made it to a KWSQA member meeting yet?

What are you waiting for?

KWSQA member meetings are generally held on the last Wednesday of each month (check www.kwsqa.org for details) at the University Of Waterloo. Meetings run from 11:45 to 1:15 and lunch is provided. We hope to see you there!

Next meeting: Wed, Mar 31, 2004

Topic: Discussion Panel - What certification is right for you?

What I Learned About Quality by Going on a Diet

By Paul Carvalho

Ah, January. That time of year when we make New Years resolutions, which we inevitably don't keep. I know some people who believe that New Years resolutions are a complete waste of time, thought and energy. Me, personally? I think there's value in making the resolutions even if we don't keep them. I'm the kind of person who enjoys the trip whether or not we reach the intended destination.

Look at it this way. If it weren't for the changing of one year to the next, would anyone really stop to think about where they are, where they want to be, and come up with new (or reuse some old) plans to help them get there? I don't think so. Maybe it has something to do with getting used to writing a new year that makes us double-check that everything else is right in our lives.

One time, a few years ago, I resolved to lose some weight. Regardless of the reasons that I had for doing this, I decided to join some fellow coworkers in a friendly competition to see who would actually reach their goals. An interesting thing happened

on my way to reaching my goal though. I stopped to think about *how* I was reaching my goal (what was working and what wasn't, what I needed and what turned out to be a waste of time, and so on), when a sudden parallel to my professional life occurred to me. At the time, I was trying to implement some high-level Quality improvement processes at the software company I was working for, and the similarities were remarkable! Here, briefly, are some of the key elements that I took away from both simultaneous experiences.

SET GOALS

This one seems obvious, but I'm still surprised by people who just set off in a direction without knowing how to tell when they get there or if they're even going the right way. As part of our "Way-down" club at work, we set a target weight to be achieved within a certain time frame. I like that. Right from the start you've answered the questions of "How much?" and "By when?" that you can quantitatively measure against. I've seen many Quality improvement efforts fail because target goals and time frames were not clearly set or communicated from the beginning.

The "Why" is also a key question to answer at this point. It is the driving force for reaching your goals and for clarifying to others why they should help you on your quest. There are many reasons to diet, just as there are many reasons to improve quality. The reasons might be personal or tied to some future reward. Don't make assumptions at this point. If you can't think of any good reasons for doing it, or the timing might not be right, don't do it. An interesting quote to keep in mind here is: "Never try to teach a pig to sing. It wastes your time and annoys the pig."

GET A BUDDY

If you're planning to change your diet, whether for short-term or long-term, you will eventually need someone to give you support, encouragement and to remind you of the benefits and rewards awaiting you when you reach your goals. This could be a close family member, a friend, or coworker. (An interesting side-note here is that they don't have to actually *believe* in your goals. They just have to remind you

of them, in a convincing way, in your times of weakness.) Two quotes that come to mind here are: "No man is an island," and "Misery loves company." And going on a diet makes you about as miserable about yourself as you possibly can be.

Similarly, if you plan to engage in a Quality improvement effort that affects several teams or departments, look for a "buddy" in Senior Management. Sell your goals to someone with the clout to call all of the managers you need together and make things



"No plan can ever foresee all eventualities..."

P. Carvalho

happen. This person won't likely participate in every aspect of the project, but *make sure* you keep them completely in the loop of what's going on throughout the project. Remember to maintain your relationship with this person, since without their support, your project may be over sooner than you expect.

THE PLAN – MAKE ONE

Okay, so now you know where you want to be, and when you want to achieve your goals by, you just have to select from all the available methods and choose one that you think works best in your present circumstances. If you choose a fad diet or

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other short-term diet program, you are bound to regain the weight (and then some) when it's over. Similarly, initiating a Quality improvement program with no clear direction, or by using the wrong approach, you can be worse off than when you started when all the meetings end and the paperwork settles.

For my diet, I scribbled a few reminders on some Post-It Notes, which I eventually copied into my Palm Pilot. That was it. For a QA plan, you will likely need to use a corporate template and have a bunch of sign-offs to worry about, but aside from good, basic Project Management techniques, you will want to choose a method for implementing the plan that is simple and straightforward for all those involved. Any measurements or information that you need to collect for analysis should be as unobtrusive as possible. If there are key people that you need to do certain tasks, make sure that the work prioritization criteria is clearly identified - so that no one comes back later and offers the excuse that they were too busy with other things. Finally, either keep the project length short or identify the milestones along the way where everyone involved can get a clear idea of the progress being made towards the end goals. Interest will wane over time, especially if they think that their time and effort is being wasted with no apparent return.

THE PLAN – FOLLOW IT (within reason)

You've got the game plan; now follow it. Collect that data. Do that exercise. Review that documentation. Eat those good foods. Remember that balance between your professional and personal lives and don't kill yourself either way. There will be times

when you can't do what you want because something unexpected (i.e. more important) comes up. Go with the flow. Accommodate the new situations and adjust your plan as best as you can. No plan can ever foresee all eventualities, so be sure to leave yourself some room for movement within your plan.

THE PLAN – ASSESS and REVISE

Just as you will eventually need to step on a scale to see how your diet is progressing, you will need to collect feedback on the progress of your QA plan. This might be simply done via a quick show of hands at weekly status meetings, or you might conceive of some other more high-tech feedback collection system. Do what works best for you and collect the feedback regularly.

Are you getting the results you expected? Are you ahead or behind schedule? Are the costs exceeding the budget? These are the big questions that can make or break your plan, especially if you don't stay on top of them. Find simple ways to record the results and chart them over time so that all the important stakeholders can see how things are going. If you've given a particular method a fair try but you're not realizing the results you expected, don't be afraid to go back to the drawing board and choose a new approach if the current one is beyond hope. Never feel that you need to stick with a failing system until the bitter end. This isn't the Navy – don't go down with the ship. Show some business acumen by cutting projected losses and choose a new method now that you have a better sense of what works and what doesn't. Look to your "buddy" for support and guidance.

CELEBRATE

When it's all over, reflect on the outcome of the project. Did you meet your goals? Did you make *any* headway towards improving the situation? If so, take the small victories for the successes that they are. I didn't quite reach my goal for weight loss, but I have managed to maintain the same weight since then, so I see that as a success. Similarly with Quality, sometimes there are baby steps towards Utopia that can make a situation better than it was before, even if you had hoped for more.

Whether you reach your intended goals or not, if you make it to the end of your project alive and somewhat wiser or better off, celebrate! Go see a movie with friends or coworkers. Go out for drinks or to a sports event. Have a potluck lunch or dinner. Celebrate in a way that works for you. Whether you win or lose, life goes on, so you may as well enjoy it. Cheers!

Doodle

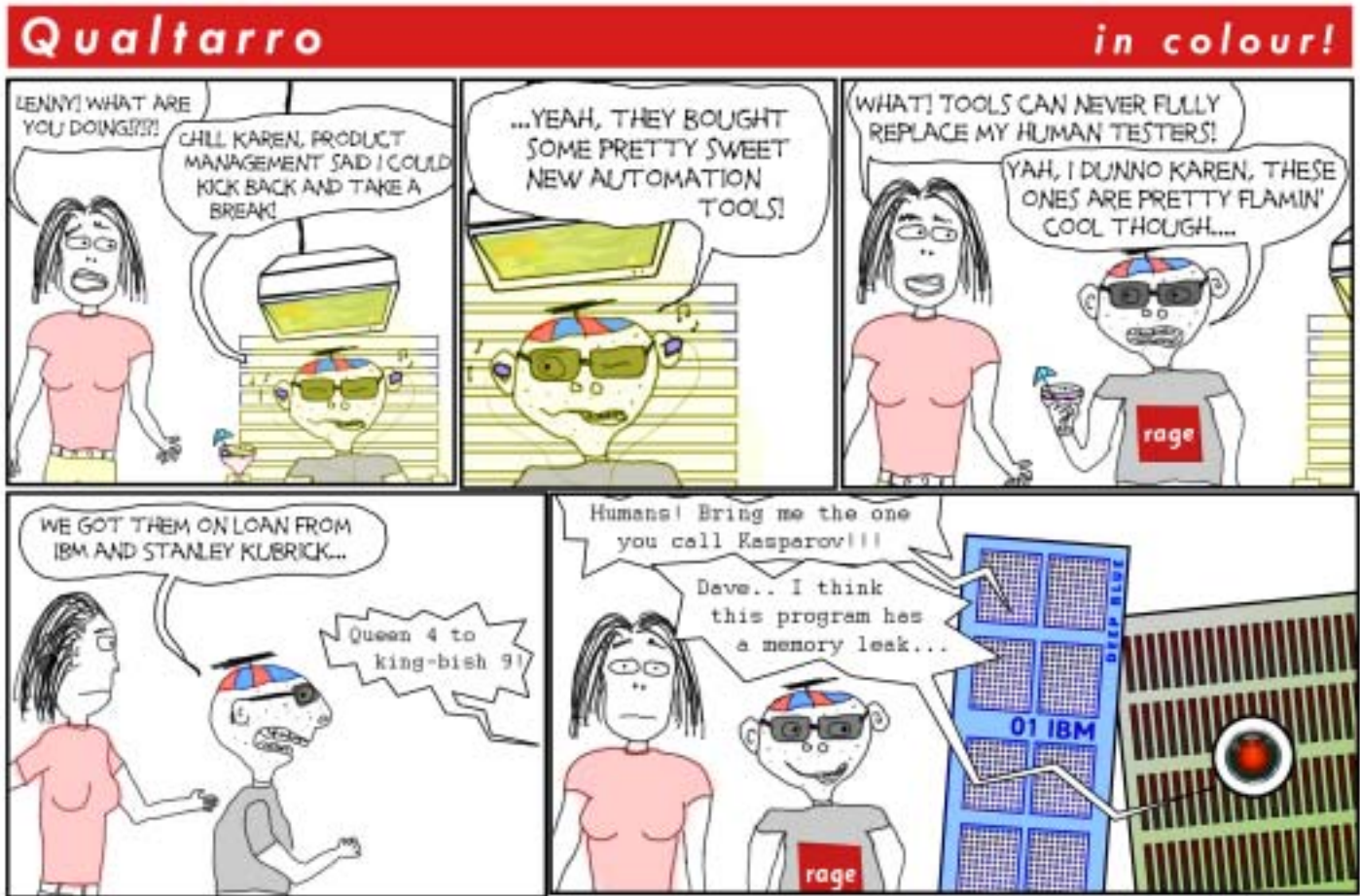


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**Great articles, Qualtarro,
book reviews and more...**



for graduates of computer science and software engineering programs

- Promote the understanding of software quality as an integral part of the software process which begins at the earliest life cycle phases within software development

We meet our goals by:

- Monthly meeting
- Mailing list
- Informal discussions
- Special events
- Standard SQA practice and advancements library
- Guest speakers from industry and academia

Cooperation with other local and international software quality groups

The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not 'Eureka!' (I found it!) but 'That's funny ...'

Isaac Asimov (1920 - 1992)

The same is true when it comes to software testing - ed.

Our Mission

To Promote a more disciplined approach to software quality by:

- Providing the Software Quality Assurance community with an open forum in which to share expertise
- Promoting a professional image of Software Quality in the local hi-tech community
- Promoting the discipline of Software Quality as a viable career option

