

Title of Paper

A Thinking Framework for Context - Driven Test Documentation

Presenter

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Level

Introductory Intermediate Advanced

Target Group

Test Managers Practitioners Both

Abstract

Whenever the topic of documentation is discussed, it always reminds me of the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. In this story, a family of three bears live in a house in the woods. One day, the bears go for a walk, leaving their house unlocked. While they are out, Goldilocks enters the house and discovers three bowls of porridge. The bowls have been heated to each bears' specific taste so when Goldilocks samples the porridge she finds that the father's porridge is "too hot", the mother's porridge is "too cold", but the cub's porridge is "just right".

Many testers experience a similar problem when using other testers' documentation as a basis for their own, only to discover that it results in "too much" or "too little" information and does not fulfil their own written communication needs. Goldilocks could easily move from one bowl of porridge to another, however, we aren't always so fortunate, regularly finding ourselves with documentation that has become out-of-date, yet is too sparse or too unwieldy to maintain.

Working with too much or too little test documentation can significantly reduce the productivity of any test team. As testing matures as a profession, so must our ability to reason about documentation and select an approach that complements our own specific context. Hence, this talk will share a thinking-framework for making decisions that allow us to spend just the right amount of time documenting and leave the maximum amount of time for finding bugs.

The talk will begin by discussing documentation from past projects to reveal the foundation of the framework - the fact that our written communication needs move along a scale from being light and agile to formal and disciplined, depending on our context. Many factors affect our context as testers, so the second part of the talk will focus on the factors that change our written communication needs (often in relation to increasing or decreasing our use of other communication channels) and how these factors can be used to reason about the level of detail and formality of our documentation.

Biography

Matthew is a Test Strategist for Ivar Jacobson International and a regular speaker at software engineering events. He has taken breaks from testing to work as a project manager, analyst and developer, but his true passion will always be finding bugs. He has been involved in all aspects of testing, from creating automated tests to running process improvement initiatives. More recently, he has focused his attention on model-based testing and testing within iterative development lifecycles.

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