



White paper

Test it before you test it

Perform product testing at all steps along the way

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Established product development companies have QA departments that are responsible for testing their products. Typically, development engineers produce product features that are later integrated and tested as a complete system by the QA department. The entire system may even be readily available to all engineers, but they are typically focused on their own areas of responsibility. Pre-testing certain features of a system is called unit testing, and it has some efficiency and quality advantages. Unit testing should be carried out by each development engineer, and should include usability, quality, and if possible automated component level testing. The engineer should attempt to produce a shipping quality product before turning QA loose on it. This approach will reduce the number of bugs you produce, and therefore must track, and the inefficiencies of communicating those issues to everyone involved. The product you send to QA will be higher quality, and allow them to move deeper into testing before time runs out.

I recommend that each engineer be provided with an independent test computer and any necessary supporting apparatus. It is essential to take testing out of the development environment, and into the user domain. The closer you can simulate use by actual customers the better the testing will be. Simply operating the system from a different computer accomplishes this. It forces developers to think differently and work in a different mode. You cannot think like a user when you are operating in your familiar development environment.

You may consider using automated testing tools to stress test your product features. Automated tools are also good for ongoing compatibility testing. This approach is called software scaffolding, where temporary frameworks are erected to give you direct access to more detailed areas of your product. This is certainly not user-centric testing, but it can be helpful to produce more robust products.

About Us

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