Product Review – Issue & Test Management System

[Translation from <u>a post originally published in Hebrew by IsraelTest</u> on his blog on July 21st 2009. The translation was reviewed by the Author.]

Almost every Organization has a system to manage requirements, tests and bugs. This market segment is saturated with many solutions starting from the simple and free, and all the way to the complex and very expensive platforms.

The development organization's management team, and in particular its QA manager, are responsible for finding a suitable Test Management System; one that fits the nature, working methods, and (of course) the budget of their team. Many times we read in (web) forums questions from tests managers asking for the optimal (QA management) system, the one that can answer all their needs.

In this article I'm going to review the PractiTest system. I'll present its main advantages and disadvantages, and try to help answer the question of whether it is the right system to introduce into your company and use to manage your tests and issues.

PractiTest has many advantages; these are some of the main ones:

1. The system is web-based, so it is possible to login from any place and any computer; it doesn't require any client installation, and this is a huge advantage. In addition the data is saved on the Web in a secure manner, so that most organizations have the possibility of working with PractiTest.
    The fact that the system is web-based, allows you to work in any form and team configuration, including outsource and off-shore.

2. PractiTest's GUI is easy, innovative and friendly; a big advantage compared to other systems to manage tests that are hard to understand and use.

3. It is very easy to get statistical data; with a display that is dynamic and clear to the user (Flash-based). Users can point to any graph and drill down to a very small resolution. The graphs are clear and colorful, and show the data in the best possible way.

4. PractiTest allows users to open issues and tasks by email. This is a huge advantage, and with the right working method it becomes an excellent option; for example, users can open issues from the field at any time.

5. It's possible to import issues, tests, and steps (of tests) from excel files. This option makes the introduction of PractiTest a much simpler process.
    The import wizard is easy and clear, and the whole process works very fast.

6. The issues display is clear to understand and easy to use. The user can click on the issue, and see all the data regarding the issue or task – status, severity, assigned to, etc; and even a link to the relevant test where it was detected.

7. The system is dynamic and customizable; users can make changes to the fields in the modules in accordance to the methodology used by the organization.
It's very easy to configure and customize the system according to the organization's needs – a simple process that will take up to one hour.

8. Of course PractiTest comes at a low price compared to other similar systems in the market. We all know that the price is important.

9. The issues workflow and the transition between states is fully customizable, even creating transitions based on the permission's group.
This option helps the Tests Manager to enforce the processes in the organization, adjusting the system to the organization's methodology.
The GUI here is simple and again easy to use.

10. User permissions in the system are managed based on groups.
The correct permissions policy prevents mistakes and problems in documentation, changes of values by mistake, bad history, and inaccurate data.

11. Cost my friends! The money in this case plays a very important role.
In comparison to other tools with the parallel capabilities, this system is by far cheaper and gives an excellent solution.

Some of the system disadvantages are:

1. You cannot export graphs and statistical tables to external files.
Many times the testers are required to supply documents such as tests summary, progression report, etc. These reports require in most cases graphs.
Since the graphs are not exportable, it will require some extra work to make it manually. To be more accurate, there is a way to export the data to excel files and manually create the graphs; this may be a suitable workaround until the graphs export will be developed.

2. Linking tests to requirements is simple, but not very convenient after a while. You can link from the requirement to a test and from tests to tests; but this requires you to remember the test number and the issue number in order to link. With today's technology and the excellent GUI of the system, we would have expected a simple drag & drop to make this linkage.
Since the original review was published and until it was translated out, that disadvantage was fixed and it's irrelevant.

3. Tests execution is pretty simple, and requires scrolling the page downwards in order to progress with the test scenario. Indeed it's possible to always see the next steps and move forward, but showing only one step each time is also convenient in some occasions - it could have been better to let the tester work this way if he wanted to.

4. What happens if there's a requirement that doesn't need to be tested? There's no built-in way to do show this option but to add a Boolean custom field named "test required".

5. The search GUI is very convenient, but there's no ability to search using wildcard. This may affect users in later stages of the project when the database is full and finding objects becomes harder.

6. The help is almost empty. It is true that the system is convenient and easy to understand, but a new user that is doesn't have a QA background may find some of the things difficult to understand. A help menu will do a lot to simplify the processes, and PractiTest system is lacking on this item.

   For those who insist and want to study, there are short screen-casts videos in the company's website. These screen-casts may help in many of the cases. In addition, in any problem or question it's possible to ask the support team, and a detailed answer will arrive shortly.
   Since the original review was published the help menu has been expanded and is constantly being expanded.

7. In the data export functionality, there is no way to define the columns and decide what exports and what doesn't, except for the issues module (by defining a specific view, with specific fields and filters).

To summarize:

The system shows very good results and we can say that it plays in the same field as the big systems; it is far from being perfect but it supplies good functionality and results.

The value for money in this case is great, and it is recommended to get an impression of the system when examining a tool for managing the tests in the organization. It seems that the company is focusing in the international markets, and specifically to small-medium organizations.

You can try a DEMO of PractiTest (the system that already comes with some data, and after initial configuration) - Click here to register to the DEMO.
You can also get a license to use the system FREE for a period of 30 days; in this case the system comes empty - Click here to get the system for 30 days trial and start working.
PractiTest website.

This article presents a personal opinion and should be not used as a recommendation for any organization to use the system. In addition, the use of PractiTest is conditioned on signing on the EULA, and it's in the sole responsibility PractiTest.

PractiTest's comment:
The PractiTest platform is dynamic and gets upgraded every 4 to 5 weeks.
The review is indeed professional and to the point.
The disadvantages that were specified (like the advantages) do exist, and the main majority of them will be addressed in the upcoming software upgrades.

* The original post is at - http://www.tapuz.co.il/blog/ViewEntry.asp?EntryId=1516850