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5 TIPS

TO MANAGE YOUR OUTSOURCED TESTING

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With the fast pace of the software industry and the accelerating delivery times, teams are increasingly pressed for time. Agile software development has increased the demands further by adding iterations and hence regression workloads. To meet these aggressive timelines, stringent budgets and higher quality standards, many software development teams are now looking towards outsourcing their testing.

While some teams incorporate outsourcing as a part of their testing efforts for lack of in-house expertise or skills, others depend on outsourcing their complete test efforts to avoid having to employ full time testers and save on budget.

Whatever be the reason for your team outsourcing it's testing, it is still not the easiest thing to manage and reaping the full benefits of this effort actually needs good management and collaboration. Here we describe five tips to manage your outsourced testing like a pro!

Treat Them like Your Team

The outsourced test team must be treated like a part of your own (internal) team. The first step you must take after finalising your outsourced testing vendor is to ask your team members, to get acquainted and open communication channels with them. Your in-house team members like business analysts, developers and in-house testers, if any, must have open and direct communication with the outsourced QA team. Use a single communication channel like Slack, professional chat groups or Skype calls to familiarize yourselves and break the ice which would benefit the entire team in the long run.

Invest in Training the Outsourced Test Team

At the onset of your project or your undertaking with the outsourcing test team, the best way to begin is to invest some time and effort in training them about your project and product. This is the only way for them to be included in your vision for the software being developed, its background, the kind of testing expected to be performed and the desired quality aspects.

Since the outsourced QA team may be separated geographically and not co-located, they do not have access to informal channels of information like chats with peers and being a part of discussions and decisions. This training would make them feel included and also bring a sense of oneness of purpose within the entire team. This also prevents clashes between developers and testers in the future, owing to testers logging bugs which are 'as designed' or 'not a bug', because of lack of understanding, which frequently lead to conflicts.

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Meet often,
and also in person

During the project's duration, it is important to have periodic discussions on their progress and challenges. **Plan to have daily or weekly meeting with the entire team where outsourced QA team and in-house team can discuss their dependencies, challenges and ways to help each other out.** Also plan to have periodic one-on-ones with key people in the outsource company where you can discuss the project's progress and ways to improve the interactions within the teams.

The key thing to remember when planning these meetings is to identify a set of metrics to monitor which are available and understood by all, which will be used as a benchmark to indicate progress within the team. It can be as simple as Tests performed per day, Defects logged per sprint, User stories tested per sprint etc. For getting testing team's updates: count of open defects, defect life (lingering unresolved defects), pending tasks on user stories etc. used to indicate developers' status of work. Having these metrics defined and open for discussion keeps everyone on the same page about the progress and means lesser conflicts during discussions.

It would also be a good idea to **meet the outsourced testing team in person to transfer knowledge, get to know the people and their style of working and develop a team culture.** Have them come down to your place or visit them with your team for some time and work together collaboratively.

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Centralised System for Test Management

When managing a distributed team testing the same system, **the best way to manage the work allocation, test planning, status of tests performed and their outcomes, is to have a centralised platform in place for test management.** This can be achieved by using a standard test management tool (like PractiTest) which can enable you to:

✔ Create tests in a standard format on a common portal

✔ Manage allocation of test cases for sprint and release plans

✔ Control test runs and view test results

✔ Link failed tests with corresponding defects

✔ Have a history of test runs, comments by team members

✔ Create reports and metrics on progress of testing by sprint, release, team member etc.

This puts you in control of all that is happening with your testing, makes every team member accountable and owner of their own allocated tasks and promotes transparency to get status and updates on each task, sprint and release.

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Account for Cultural Differences

When working with a distributed team of any nature, cultural differences are a key factor to consider. This becomes even more important in case of outsourced testing teams because of an additional factor of being a part of different companies and a client-vendor relationship. So, be sure to factor in geographical and time zone differences when scheduling meetings. Be patient in communication when there is a language difference. And also account for understanding, way of communication, inferring words or phrases of common slang as they all can be a part of a culture. This is all the more reason to meet in person so that these cultural differences are understood by the team and also makes them more patient, accommodating and receptive to new ways and ideas from each other.

The most important thing to remember when working with an Outsourced QA Team is that you are working with people. This means that every person would want to be heard and also to be accounted for and respected for their work. It might be easy to give your remote team a lower priority, but if you do that then you cannot expect to get their top efforts and greatest work too. Since people tend to return value based on the investment we put into them, so the best approach would be to nurture a long-term relationship and communication with the outsourced testing team with concern and understanding.

Good luck!

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QA learning center

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Practitest is an end-to-end test management tool. A common meeting ground for all QA stakeholders, it enables full visibility into the testing process and deeper broader understanding of testing results.

Fully customizable, PractiTest can be adapted to the ever changing needs of QA teams, Including a vast array of third party integration with common bug trackers and automation tools, and robust API for the rest. Fast professional and methodological support ensures clients make the most out of their time and the system, so companies can release great products quickly according to their user's needs.

About the Author:

Nishi Grover Garg is a Testing and Agile corporate consultant and trainer with hands-on experience in all stages of software testing life cycle since 2008. Together with Agile Testing Alliance(ATA), she conducts various courses, trainings and organises testing community events & meetups. She has been a speaker at numerous conferences. Check out more of her content at the **PractiTest QA resource center**.

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