

# Delivering Quality One Weekend at a Time: Lessons Learned from Weekend Testing

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## Abstract

For many testers, the steps taken to learn and grow our craft are often ad-hoc and random. We learn from books, we ask questions and receive answers on online forums and web sites, we attend conferences and confer with peers, and we may talk to fellow testers at work. But what if those resources are not enough?

What if we had an organization that testers could turn to, where they could, practice the craft of testing, and learn from mentors from all over the world? What if such a group would tackle interesting problems and encourage both novices and experienced testers to participate? What if I said such a group was available completely free of cost to participants? Sound like fantasy? It's not; it's happening here and now. The group that does this is called "Weekend Testing". While the concept of Weekend Testing has been around for a few years, the power is in the utilization of the methods and principles, not the name or even the people behind it.

The paper explains the methods that we use in Weekend Testing, and how you can participate in sessions that Weekend Testing chapters arrange. More important, even if you never participate in an official Weekend Testing session, you can apply the concepts and methods to your group or organization. I will explain how to facilitate a Weekend Testing Session, and share some lessons learned from dozens of Weekend Testing sessions over the past couple of years. Additionally, I will show you how to take these same ideas and use them with your own organizations.

## Biography

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# 1. Introduction

We all hope to find ways that we will be able to work with and mentor other testers. In some organizations that is already in place and may be able to cover certain testing needs, but there are times where this approach does not meet particular needs:

- What if you have a need to learn a new approach to testing?
- What if you are a lone tester and do not have the benefit of a dedicated test team to work with?
- What if you are a young tester who has heard about many of the test techniques written about, but have no experience using them?

Weekend Testing is a movement of individual testers from around the globe that have made it their mission to tackle these problems, and they do so voluntarily. Its mission is to help develop testing skills and encourage veteran testers to mentor younger or less experienced testers. WT is a place where testers

- Learn and practice in a fail-safe environment
- Have an opportunity to give back to the community
- Learn through collaboration
- Share experiences
- Learn about new tools and technologies
- Share and receive peer feedback

Weekend Testing has a dedicated site and is actively maintained at <http://weekendtesting.com/>

Weekend Testing was originally formed in Bangalore, India. Many of the active testers were looking for ways to learn more about testing and to get better at it. They realized that many of the scripted test methods that they had been originally taught were insufficient in light of the challenges they were facing. Additionally, they wanted to create an environment that would allow testers from all areas of experience to have a forum to participate, practice and learn from each other. Rather than look for canned options that didn't address the issues and problems they were seeing, they banded together to help teach and learn from each other. It was officially founded on Aug 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. The first public session was held Aug 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009. This date was symbolic because it marks Indian Independence day; the founders felt that they were likewise giving "freedom" to Indian testers.

## 2. What is the Purpose of Weekend Testing?

Weekend Testing is designed as a safe area for testers to learn more about their craft. There is no default testing philosophy associated with the initiative. As stated previously, Weekend testing is a place where testers can learn and practice in a safe environment, have an opportunity to practice their testing craft, learn by interacting with other testers of varying skill levels and experience, and learn about new tools and testing techniques.

Testers can ask questions and can explore ideas openly without fear of ridicule or worrying that their efforts or ideas will be seen as wrong. Each session is planned with open expectations, so participants apply their own experience and use their own skills approaching the mission – which creates rather unique opportunity to see same problem being solved in a variety of ways. From the main Weekend Testing site, the mission of Weekend Testing is to be "a platform for software testers to collaborate, test various kinds of software, foster hope, gain peer recognition, and be of value to the community". [1]

### 3. Weekend Testing Chapters

When the original Weekend Testing group was started in Bangalore, the response to the initiative was very positive. So positive, in fact, testers from other areas in India, and in other countries, wanted to participate. The original founders considered the response and decided that having more peer groups in other places and countries was a good thing. With this, the idea of a Weekend Testing Chapter came into being [2]. The largest concentration of chapters at this time is in India. Currently, chapters have been established in Mumbai, Chennai, and Hyderabad, along with the original group in Bangalore. Australia and New Zealand have their own chapter. Europe has a chapter, and the United Kingdom hosts sessions on weeknights, and is called, appropriately enough, “Weeknight Testing”. In November of 2010 the Americas chapter of Weekend Testing was founded (serving everyone from Canada to Chile and all countries in between).

Chapters are loose collaborations, and are best considered to be peer groups of testers. While they are typically named after a city or country where founding members are located, there is a strong sense of inter-chapter participation. It is not uncommon to see testers from different continents participating in each other’s sessions, and some testers attend sessions no matter where they are or when they take place. Weekend Testing encourages the development of chapters, and wants to see them flourish in more areas.

A peer group of testers coming together and practice testing techniques does not necessarily need to have a formal structure. Nevertheless, the Weekend Testing model has proven to be successful, and as such, if chapters want to be associated with Weekend Testing officially, they agree to follow certain protocols in how they set up testing sessions, as well as conduct the sessions and report the results. Each chapter is free to take on their own testing initiatives and hold discussions that are of interest to their participants. While the process and methods could be used by anyone willing to get together and hold a testing session, it’s the posting of experience reports and transcripts, along with formal announcements and the recognition of doing so that sets Weekend Testing gatherings apart from other informal events.

One of the most important reasons for chapters is the time difference between testers. Each chapter holds their sessions at a time that is generally convenient for the participants in their geographical area. Having said that, there is no restriction for participation; many testers actively engage in any session they want to. Time differences may make certain sessions impractical (living as I do in California and in the Pacific Time Zone, if I wanted to participate in a session that was being held in India at 4:00 p.m. IST, I would need to be awake and ready at 3:30 a.m. Pacific Time. Chapters on other continents allow for a broader range of session times for all of its participants. The Americas chapter frequently gets participants from India, Europe and the United Kingdom when we hold our sessions.

### 4. Facilitating a Weekend Testing Session

The key role in a Weekend Testing session is the facilitator. The facilitator is responsible for many areas that help make the testing mission run smoothly for the participants. The facilitator:

- Determines when a session will be held.
- Sets up the announcement of the session on the main Weekend Testing site.
- Announces to other testers as to when sessions will be held.
- Chooses the topic of the session, as well as the application that will be tested (often by consulting other members of the chapter or other facilitators from other chapters to get ideas).
- Announces the testing charter and mission, which set the stage for the testing and the discussions that follow.

As an example, the Americas chapter tested an application for our second session (WTA-02 – Show Me the Money!” [3]) called DSBudget. Considering the timeframe and specifics of the application, we structured the mission as following:

- Learn and test most common user workflows.
- Test the application and see how it reacts to creating and tracking a budget.

The idea for this early session was to create a simple mission and goal, and to focus attention specifically on that area. While it would be possible to range far and wide with any application, the mission was to see what the most likely workflow would present to the testers, and what issues they would find and report. Because we have testers who participate in multiple Weekend Testing sessions in multiple chapters, it would quickly become stale if we all repeated the same applications and testing initiatives. Besides that, readers of the chat session and the experience report would be able to come up to speed quickly with the ideas and the concepts that were presented in that particular session.

In addition to announcing the sessions and choosing the topics, the facilitators are also the moderators of the session. They set the agenda, they set the pace of the discussions with the input of the other participants, and often may choose to scrap an idea they had for a session in favor of another charter and session based on the attendees and the ideas they provide. The final role of the facilitator is to compile the results and publish them in an experience report and as a chat transcript. They then announce the availability of the results. While each Weekend Testing session is a commitment of two hours worth of time for the participants, a facilitator averages around six total hours from initial idea to publishing of the experience report.

This may sound daunting, but the truth is, anyone can be a facilitator if they are willing to put in the time and guide other testers in participating in these events. The tools necessary to run these sessions are basic, and for the most part, free. Sessions are currently established and managed using Skype. During Weekend Testing sessions, only the IM or “chat” function is used for the full group, unless the purpose of the session is to test Skype functionality such as voice or video. Since chapters have participants from different parts of the world and with different levels of Internet bandwidth, we do not want to exclude anyone from participating. Additionally, limiting the interaction of the main session to Skype’s chat/IM tool has the benefit of easily providing a single transcript of the session.

The facilitator sends a message out to participants, announcing that a session is taking place, along with the date and time of the session. Along with the announcement, instructions on how to join a session are sent as well. These are usually done in the following manner:

1. The tester is asked to add the SkypeID of the Weekend Testing facilitator (usually named after the chapter for ease of lookup and remembering; the Americas chapter of Weekend Testing uses the Skype ID “**weekendtestersamericas**”).
2. We ask that testers who want to participate in Weekend Testing sessions send an email message or contact us via Skype and let us know that they are going to participate in the upcoming session. On the day of the session, the tester is expected to send a message to the facilitator and say that they want to participate. If they have already sent that message earlier, then the facilitator looks for them and confirms if they will participate. Once the facilitator receives word that they want to participate, they are added to the test group.
3. Most of the sessions are done with web applications. This is because there is a disparity around the world as to how fast applications can be downloaded and installed. What takes for some areas just seconds to download can take upwards of an hour in other places. The other reason for this is that it is common to issue a charter and mission for a session right as the session starts (see #5 below). The reason for this is to not give any advantage to some testers. The goal is to have everyone start from the same point, with the same information. In the event that an application needs to be downloaded and installed, however, then part of the session announcement includes the application to be downloaded and where to get it, so as to allow all participants the ability to start the session with the application(s) needed for the session.
4. During the session, the facilitator is expected to maintain the flow of the conversation. Each session starts with introductions from all testers. The facilitator then announces the charter and

the mission for that particular session. The expectations and the scope of the testing sessions are announced to the group.

5. The testers are then let loose for an hour to explore the application or the challenge presented in the current session. This is where the scope of the testing effort is explained, along with the purpose for the session. This could be a session to evaluate a tool, test a company site or install and work with an existing application. Each session additionally tries to focus on a learning initiative. Some sessions have dealt with heuristics, some with regression testing and others with user experience. In all cases, the goal of the facilitator is to guide the discussion and keep the participants on track. While segues and tangents happen from time to time, the facilitator needs to keep the discussion moving forward. Facilitators typically don't have time to test along with the participants during the session, which is balanced by testing they have performed while designing the mission. Facilitators act as an all-round coaching and support during the session.
6. After the first hour is finished, the facilitator then brings the testers back to the main discussion and initiates debriefing - feedback on ideas of the session, lessons learned, and potential traps and issues that may have become known during the session. This is an opportunity for the testers to speak their minds about things they felt went well and things they wish had been handled differently. Often, the frustrations voiced in one session become lessons for future sessions, so that the opportunity to learn and grow continues.

Testing sessions have had as few as five participants and some sessions have had upwards of two dozen participants. Bigger groups require having more facilitators to run smoothly; typically, one facilitator per ten participants is a good ratio.

## 5. Benefits of Weekend Testing

There are numerous benefits associated with participating in and facilitating Weekend Testing sessions. These include:

- Allowing for testers of all experience levels to get together and share ideas.
- Provide numerous ways to approach a testing challenge.
- The participants in a session will have the benefit of discussing and considering their approaches.
- Work through different scenarios, to learn from each other and have a concrete and documented source in which they can build credibility and a reputation.
- Sessions are brief and focused.

While it is helpful to have had experience in certain test areas, it is not required most of the time. Both novice testers and experienced testers can participate in sessions, and indeed the most valuable learning and most memorable sessions are those where new testers and veteran testers work together. Pair testing is encouraged, and the expectation is that testers who are veterans will be willing to pair with novices wherever possible. By doing so, new testers get the chance to benefit from the experiences of veterans, and veterans often get an opportunity to have their own methods and approaches examined in a new light and context by newer, less experienced testers. The learning goes both ways.

Many times, sessions have guest facilitators who schedule time to participate with the weekend testing groups. In the past few months Dr. Cem Kaner, Michael Bolton, and Jon Bach have both volunteered to facilitate sessions and bring topics for the groups to discuss. It's a great opportunity to have world renowned experts participate in these events and do so free of charge and have the opportunity to learn from them in this capacity.

Many times, a fearless tester offers to bring in their own application they are working on and bring up a testing mission based on the application they are currently working on in their day job. Provided no

intellectual property laws are being violated, this is a perfectly acceptable and often desired benefit of Weekend testing from many companies' perspectives.

Each testing session is recorded. The chat transcript is uploaded to the main Weekend Testing web site (<http://weekendtesting.com>) along with experience reports written by and about the participants. Since each tester that participates has the option of having their name listed with the experience report and inside of the chat transcript, this creates a simple way for a tester to highlight and demonstrate competence in a particular testing area. Simply opening a search engine and typing in "[Tester's Name] Weekend Testing" it becomes simple to verify that testers are actively participating in sessions. Additionally, it is possible to follow along with experience reports and chat transcripts to see what various testers are learning and teaching each other, and what finds they have made while participating in Weekend Testing sessions.

In addition to the experience reports and chat transcripts, there is also a permanent repository of test reports and bugs that have been filed. Sessions utilize a hashtag system to help identify areas of interest, as well as to make a simple method to parse lines of the chat files using scripts if desired (see "Section 7, Lessons Learned in Weekend Testing" for examples).

This way, testers can go examine bugs from previous sessions and consider additional test ideas. Also, these chat transcripts are available to all, in many cases long after the test session has been completed. This gives an opportunity for those who are shy or unsure if they would like to participate in sessions themselves a chance to, at their leisure and at their own pace, review previous sessions and examine missions, charters and real time experiences, with no time limit or impatient peers to get in the way of their understanding the questions and issues raised during the session.

## 6. Challenges of Weekend Testing

One of the largest challenges is associated with one of its key benefits. Since sessions are designed to last for two hours at the top end, testing missions are developed to fit that time frame. There are times where longer and more extended testing sessions would be valuable, but they are not currently part of the process. In addition, test initiatives are standalone in most cases. Since it would be a barrier to participation to have many serial sessions (as well as require an extended commitment from those who would participate in the sessions), the ideal has been to focus on standalone sessions.

Automation is a special challenge, in the sense that many testers need to have a similar background and understanding to effectively approach testing with an automation framework. While there have been introductory sessions conducted with automation in mind, more involved and advanced topics are currently not covered in the Weekend Testing format.

These are areas that are actively being explored by participants and there have been discussions around how to address some of these key issues. Some ideas that have been discussed have been the idea of having "special interest groups" that consider key areas like automation, performance, load testing, testing education, etc. and those who sign on to these special interest groups commit to possibly more active sessions and sessions of longer duration. Currently, there is an initiative underway with Weekend Testing Americas called "Project Sherwood" that is meant to help address these areas. This initiative is being designed to allow for longer missions (many hours or many days if needed) and with the ability to link multiple testing sessions together under a single framework.

## 7. Lessons Learned from Weekend Testing

Over the past few years, many different chapters have conducted over a hundred sessions and compiled a corresponding number of experience reports. There are many lessons that we have learned from these

experience reports. To go through all of them would be far too expansive for a single paper, but the following are some examples of sessions we help and lessons that we learned. Please note that the sessions listed are not in chronological order and are a mix of sessions from various chapters, not just the Americas chapter.

### **Lesson 1: Geography Matters**

Session: WTA-01: Let's Dance [4]

During the first Weekend Testing session that the Americas chapter hosted, we tested an open source version of the popular Dance Dance Revolution dance game called Stepmania. This was my first full facilitation of a session, and I was surprised to see that there were not just testers from the Western hemisphere, but from Europe and from India as well. The supporting files were easily downloaded by many of the American testers in a matter of minutes. Some of the testers in India, however, were not able to download the application at all during the course of the session. Several of the testers were still downloading the application after the session had concluded.

The lesson learned from this was that different geography areas have different levels of Internet capacity, and if there is a requirement to download an application, that requirement must be announced well in advance of the session, so that all testers have the ability to start the session on the same footing. While this may give some testers a "head start" that is outweighed by the need to make sure that no tester is left unable to test for the session.

### **Lesson 2: The Value of Session Based Testing**

Session: WTA-08: Quoth the Developer, Nevermore![5][6]

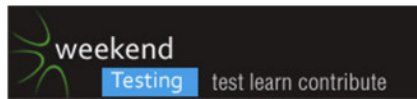
Weekend Testing participant and developer Ben Simo offered up his Software Developer Quote Generator at <http://ribbit.cc/> for this session. Ben participated in this session as the stakeholder. The primary purpose was to explore the power of session based test management and methods that could help us maximize the potential of the test group in a short period of time.

The goal of the attendees was to explore the product and plan testing missions – charters. Each pair or team split off and worked on their own testing charters, effectively splitting the testing mission up into a number of attainable targets. Each group then broke down the areas further and created specific charters in those individual areas. At the end of the session, all charters and missions would be combined into one document. Through this, the session attendees decided to optimize their reporting directly into the session notes by creating hash-tags:

- Bugs used the hash-tag #bug,
- Issues used the hash-tag #issue
- Charters were added with the hash-tag #charter.
- Focus areas within the charter were added with the hash-tag #area.

Not only did this prove to be an effective model for cutting up and creating quick charters and examples for testing, it became a reporting mechanism in and of itself that was quickly adopted by the attendees and used in future sessions as an efficient mechanism for recording in real time their findings.

It also provided a simple syntax to be used with scripts to parse the information and split it out based on the hash-tags used.



[11:57:35 AM | Edited 11:58:22 AM] Ajay Balamurugadas: #issue - ((bug)) - No visible image but a tooltip exists:  
<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/8987774/No%20visible%20image%20-%20Tooltip.JPG>  
<http://ribbit.cc/q/338>

[11:57:49 AM] Ben Simo: please provide urls with your issue and bug reports

[11:58:17 AM] David Vydra: #charter MLK: forward/bavk buttons on browser

[11:58:54 AM] griffin jones: Time check.

[11:59:07 AM] Weekend Testers Americas: @ Twenty minutes until regroup.

[11:59:14 AM] Shmuel Gershon: I am back, sorry for that.

[11:59:23 AM] Shmuel Gershon: #area: team :): Usability. Aim audience are testers and developers (per Ben)

[11:59:31 AM] Shmuel Gershon: #charter: team :): Explore the color-changing function -- how often, which colors, how can this disturb a user?

[11:59:36 AM] Shmuel Gershon: #charter: team :): Explore the styles and how the lack of styles can affect the usage

Figure 1: Chat transcript with hash tag examples (<http://weekendtesting.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/WTA08-ExperienceReport.pdf>).

### Lesson 3: Let Divide and Conquer Be Your Ally

Session: WTA-04: Put it on the Board [7]

Timothy Coulter developed <http://Corkboard.me> as a virtual “Sticky Note” cork-board that is accessible online. It gives the user the ability to create, resize, modify, and add text, pictures and other items. Our mission was to “Employ domain testing techniques (“Divide and Conquer The Data”) on the sticky notes in cork-board application to find bugs.” As a reference, we provided the participants with the following documents:

[www.testingeducation.org/a/DTD&C.pdf](http://www.testingeducation.org/a/DTD&C.pdf) [8]

<http://www.kaner.com/pdfs/GoodTest.pdf> [9]

Think of the fact that this application could be accessed by any number of devices and any number of browsers. How could we test all of the variations, even with a large group of gathered testers? Even with an application that is, on the surface, fairly simple, the potential number of inputs and variables that could affect testing are almost infinite. As a way to bring order to the potential chaos, the attendees split up into small groups and each took a chunk of the testing puzzle. Groups are generally self forming, but if individuals do not coordinate quickly or individual do not speak up, which was the case this time, the facilitator can make suggestions to encourage participants to create pairs, or invite the less vocal participants to pair with the facilitator(s). Each group would discuss their findings at the end of the testing period or at times initiate chats with other groups. Many times, the facilitator needs to poke each group and remind them to share their findings with the main group from time to time. By using these techniques, each of the smaller pairs or teams were able to effectively “Divide and Conquer” the application.



By divvying up the testing into slices of functionality and farming it out to other groups, the potential for effective coverage goes way up, and while there may be overlapping areas, the coverage provided by this group approach and through “Divide and Conquer” tactics can make a big difference in total coverage of an application. While not complete coverage, it gets the group closer to that goal.

#### **Lesson 4: Make Sure the Testers Understand the Mission**

Session WTA-03: Rapid Reporter, Mapping the Testing Tool [10][11]

For this session we focused on a tool called Rapid Reporter. This application is a tool developed by frequent Weekend Tester Shmuel Gershon. In addition to being a regular Weekend Testing participant, he presents in conferences, advocates for Exploratory Testing, and he developed Rapid Reporter for the purpose of supporting exploratory note taking. The focus of the session was intended to be looking at Rapid Reporter and learning about the application with the goal of being able to use the application for future testing sessions. In fact, the stated mission was “Produce either a list or a mind map of the features of Rapid Reporter *with the goal of guiding a future session of Weekend Testing*”.

The session itself yielded a treasure trove of information about the application itself, including great suggestions for modifying and improving the tool. One of the first takeaways from this session, outside of the great features and desired improvements for the Rapid Reporter application, was the fact that there was some confusion as to what the actual testing session was supposed to accomplish. While traps and issues were being discussed we realized an unintended trap was there. The mission: “Produce either a list or a mind map of the features of Rapid Reporter with the goal of guiding a future session of testing” could be interpreted two different ways:

1. Understand the features of Rapid Reporter so that we could test Rapid Reporter more thoroughly (i.e. directly testing Rapid Reporter).
2. Understand the features of Rapid Reporter so that we could test another application and utilize Rapid Reporter in the process.

Very often, testers receive a charter or a mission, and think they understand it, and then go off to test with the information they received and the way that they understood it. This session showed us that it is important to make sure that all testers understand clearly the intention of the mission, and that asking questions to help clarify the mission is critical to the success of the session. Moreover, this is an important example that testing without exploring about client’s need produces irrelevant results and brings little to no value.

#### **Lesson 5: The Challenges of Understanding Cultural Norms**

Session: EWT-39: Let’s Date [12]

This session was based on the real world experiences of Markus Gaertner and was shared with the European Weekend Testing chapter. Imagine a large order is hinging on your ability to solve a particular challenge. In this case, a customer in Nepal is interested in your company’s application. All looks good, but they have one important request. The application must support Nepali dates in combination to the standard Gregorian calendar.

Seems like a simple issue to resolve, right? Just map the two calendars and all will be fine. Except for the fact that, for many testers, they don’t know going in what the Nepalese calendar is and how the dates would correspond to the Gregorian calendar. How could we implement such a feature? Could we even map these two calendars reliably? Through research it was discovered that the Nepalese calendar is

based off of the Bikram Samwat Calendar, which is decided by a committee every decade. Therefore, dates twenty or 30 years in the future are impossible to guarantee.

Through the discussion, a consensus was reached that the requirements would have to be clearly discussed. The limitation about the inability to guarantee dates more than a decade into the future was a major potential issue. Without some study of the past and present implementation of the Bikram Samwat calendar, and the realization that there was no discernable repeatable pattern to the dates, the requirements of any tests would be based on erroneous information and a promise of quality might be made that could not be delivered upon. For a number of the testers, the idea of a calendar system that changed that frequently was both disconcerting and frustrating. The key take-away was that researching the calendar and the system for assigning dates provided critical information that shaped the requirements and the potential support of the date matching rules. Additionally, it reminded the testers about the value of “testing the requirements”. One could question if the requirements as designed were adequate for this system. What happens if a date must be calculated that falls outside of the expected parameters? Think of a 30-year mortgage program; it would require a specific date to be effective. Not being able to calculate those dates could prove very costly in the long run.

### **Lesson 6: Usability Testing and the Value of the “Persona”**

Session: WTA-12: What Are You Watching? [13]

This session focused on the SideReel.com website. The goal was to have a look at the aspects that we commonly associate with “user experience”. Even with testers it is possible to get different interpretations of what feels right in an application and what doesn’t. Having multiple testers focusing on user experience can open up discussion points for an application even when the testers are not the target users for the application.

The mission for this session was to follow the basic flow of the application (as seen by the developers and the company). With this basis, the group was let loose for an hour and asked to put themselves into the shoes of a “typical user”, and with a broad idea as to what a typical user might look for and find appealing in the site, or find less than appealing.

There were many areas that were questioned and evaluated, specifically with the ideas of what would be considered a good approach to searching for show content, dealing with the links that were found, variance in display on various browsers, and again, really trying to get into the mind of who might be the primary user of the SideReel product, and numerous suggestions as to how to make the experience better for the user. One of the most powerful tools in this process is the idea of the “Persona” or trying on the roles of different users. A middle aged man is going to approach the SideReel service differently than a teen-aged girl would, not just in the choices of the shows they watch, but with their expectations as to how easy it is to find links, and what threshold for experimentation each would allow. Playing these different personas will help greatly with getting a better feel for the application and the best way to interact with it.

### **Lesson 7: Clear Communication of Issues and the Value of a Close Read**

Session: WTANZ-11: The Critical Thinking Skill of Close Reading [14]

As testers, we re all expected to communicate clearly and effectively, but what can we do when those who have come before us, or developers who we are working with, do not follow the same rules?

The Australia/New Zealand chapter of Weekend Testing hosted this session. The goal was to help testers recognize the value of a close reading and applying critical thinking skills to the process. Imagine that you have two bugs, and they have been merged together as duplicates. The question that came up was to see which of the two bugs should have been used and which was marked as a duplicate and discarded? Was it the one selected as the representative case the appropriate one to keep? Should a third bug have been written that more effectively combines description of the other two bugs?

The session focused on taking several bugs marked as duplicates and comparing/contrasting to see which was the most effective at communicating the issue in question. The takeaway that I took from this session was that, often, we gloss over the things that we read, or we read into it what we want to read, because we have conditioned ourselves to focus on particular areas. Because of that, we often neglect to do a close read of the real issue, and we miss important data points that will help with reproducibility or with finding solutions. With a more critical read, or even reading the same issue at different times, we can get more information on each read through.

## 8. Conclusion

Weekend Testing has the power of harnessing and utilizing the minds and efforts of passionate testers all over the world. Its strength comes from the different experiences of individuals with different experiences and understanding of how to accomplish key goals in their testing. The potential to learn something new is always there, and oftentimes, veterans learn as much from neophytes as the new testers learn from the long timers. The methods and processes used in Weekend Testing can also provide a jump-start to any organizations testing efforts. By putting into place the paradigms and methods used by Weekend Testing, test teams that know little to nothing of each other, or test teams that have been together for years, can make major strides in developing skills, transferring knowledge and helping train newer testers with greater confidence and have fun in the process.

For those who are curious about this approach, by all means consider joining a session of Weekend Testing some weekend and see it in person and in real time. For those who have participated in these events and enjoy the format, consider becoming facilitators of your own Weekend Testing style group. Who knows, with a little practice and dedication, teams could grow much stronger and learn a tremendous amount from each of its members. If you would like to experience the Weekend Testing method for yourself, keep a look out for announcements in various venues about future sessions. From there, get on Skype, and come join us for a couple of hours of fun and productive testing. What's more, if you have a core group that finds this valuable, consider joining one of the chapters in your area, or even starting one of your own. There are plenty of volunteers who would like nothing more than to see more Weekend Testers join the movement, and would be more than happy to help you join the fold. Whether it be on weekends, at night or in the morning doesn't matter. What matters is that testers help each other get better in their craft, and as far as we in Weekend Testing are concerned, the more the merrier.

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