

Letter from India

Dear Reader,

Due to differences in culture with and within each country, outsourcing remains a challenge to both parties. Business model and approach needs to be tailored based on the country a work is being outsourced. I am a tester from India who has been a part of this challenge. I spend a lot time in each project understanding what my North American and European customers are expecting from me and they too spend equal time in understanding what I am trying to understand, adding to the cost and time for both of us. This challenge is dealt by every tester here and so does all customers from North America and Europe.

We have been into testing for quite sometime now and still we are being asked to follow scripts. It is interesting to note that developers here aren't given scripts for developing. As someone who has looked through it, I would want to help clients in North America and Europe to understand what we want today, from you to test better than what we have been doing with scripts.

As we have been testing a lot, we now understand testing a lot better than compared to those days where we relied on your scripts to understand the job we are trying to do and also called that testing. Why don't you tap the learning and knowledge that we have had to get better testing done? You still pay the same :), we are ok with it.

The problem with a script is; you are always doubtful if we understood what you wanted to mean in it. Let's try to deal with the problem as smart human beings than blaming it on culture and first language problems. Michael Bolton once wrote in his blog, "Pradeep's first language is not English--his first language appears to be testing" and there have been many Indian testers even before me who have been shaping themselves to adopt Testing as their first language and the current generation is more promising.

At a company that I worked for previously, I sought freedom to do exploratory and rapid software testing that I learned and practiced by the help of James Bach and Michael Bolton, as a parallel effort to other testers running scripts. My manager was so happy to grant me permission, despite the customer we were delivering our service had demanded metrics such as – Number of test cases executed per hour per tester, number of bugs found per test cycle. On becoming curious after seeing happiness in my manager's face, I asked him; why were you so excited when I asked for permission to do exploratory testing? He had to say that, he was happy to grant freedom to someone who already had the freedom to explore but was bounded by the scripts.

Today, my manager believes a lot on exploratory and rapid testing approaches since the result of combining exploratory and scripted testing was: We found more bugs, quickly before the client side test team did. This left the client side test team to duplicate issues and not rise any critical ones apart from what we found here. Wait a minute, the client test team is as smart as we are but they were following scripts and we made a false claim that we adhere to the same scripts, too.

Here is another interesting story: A manager with whom I spoke to in Bangalore had attained a great reputation from the customers he worked, for delivering a great value for the cost. On questioning the secret, he passed it on to me: 50% of testers were asked to test based on their ideas, exploration and no scripts to guide them. It would surprise you that this secret was not shared with the client by the management and the client still thinks that scripted testing produced great results for them. Let's blame it on the SLA the management of the company and the client signed together.

For some of the good services you have been receiving from India, we are already doing some exploration **but without informing you** and manipulating the metrics we give you to suit our Service Level Agreements. Why not we think about changing our SLA's, in which you state "*Please do exploratory testing, we encourage you to do so but do inform us hereafter*"

We understand that you might want to measure us based on something that is rigid enough to measure but at the same time, we also realize you are concerned about the quality of work we do when the project gets to a tough state.

Here is what you might want to experiment: We have become cognizant of structured exploratory testing and or through session based test management research work by people like Jon Bach, James Bach, Cem Kaner, Michael Bolton, Elizabeth Hendrickson, Scot Barber and other experts who attended the Exploratory Testing Peer Conference. Why not we pilot that for a few projects to see how better a service we can deliver you for what you are paying us. Exploratory testing also helps us learn your product better and that helps us to provide better support for your products and faster analysis time. So you get so much ROI. That also means you make more profits.

We love testing and we would be happy to have it as our first language. We are aware that you can help us to do that and here is the letter for the same. Do consider and honor the request.

With anticipation to hear the change in SLA's,

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