

The Tester's Three C's: Criticism, Communication and Confidence

Prepared and presented by

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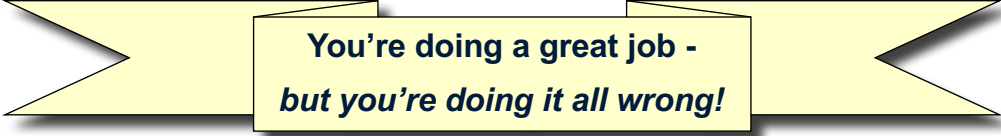
- Criticism
 - what is it? different types of criticism
 - responding to being criticised
 - how to criticise effectively
- Communication
 - ways of communicating
 - push and pull style
 - Virginia Satir's communication interaction model
- Confidence

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What do testers do?

- testers' work:
 - investigate, check, assess, find bugs
- applied to:
 - other people's work output
- we are critics
 - we *criticize* other people's work



You're doing a great job -
but you're doing it all wrong!

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What is criticism?

- from the Greek “krites” - judge
- Wikipedia definitions
 - examination, analysis, interpretation, judgement of something
 - positive or negative
 - *disapproval* expressed by pointing out faults / shortcomings
 - negative
 - a spoken or written *attack* on somebody / something
 - even more negative

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Three types of criticism

- valid criticism
 - true or an element of truth
- unjustified / invalid criticism
 - we don't live up to someone else's expectations or fantasy
- vague criticism
 - difference of opinion
 - says more about the critic

When we are criticized

- awareness
- response
 - natural reactions (two extremes)
 - counter-attack / defensive
 - passive / accepting (crushed?)
 - better reaction: assess the criticism
 - different reaction to valid vs invalid criticism
 - use assertive techniques to respond
- action



Assertive responses to criticism

- fogging
 - acknowledge there may be some truth in it
 - deflects the criticism
 - not “yes, but”!
 - listening / reflecting technique
- admitting the truth
 - if the criticism is valid
- requesting specific feedback
 - leads into action

“I don’t see how the testing can possibly take this long”

“That’s right, you don’t see how the testing can possibly take this long”

Advice for receiving criticism

DO


- realise they could be right (you may not be perfect)
- put it into perspective
- discuss openly
- work through an action plan to fix the problem
- get feedback on the action plan

DON'T

- ignore it
- assume they are wrong
- get angry or retaliate
- argue about it or get defensive
- be anxious
 - easy to say

Giving criticism / bug report

- “DASR script”
 - Describe (the specific behavior)
 - “When this happens...” / “when this is input”
 - Acknowledge (the effect)
 - “I feel ...” / “the system does this”
 - Specify (different behavior)
 - “What I would prefer is ...” / “it should do”
 - Reaffirm (their worth / ability to correct it)
 - “We/you will improve” / “this is good overall”
- realistic mutual goals & expectations



When did you criticise recently?
How did it go? Get a good reaction?

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Testers as critics

- bug reports
 - neutral wording, specific, detailed
- recurring type of bug from a developer
 - e.g. use DASR
 - action: would you like a checklist?
- consistent under-estimates for testing
 - criticize your boss?
 - identify common goals
 - use DASR or pull style

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Advice for giving criticism

DO

- gather all the facts
- be open to their view (you could be wrong)
- want the person to succeed (in their best interests)
- be specific
- work through an action plan to fix the problem

DON'T

- get angry
- use sarcasm or jokes
- want the person to feel bad
- be vague
- be overly general (“always”, “never”)
- walk away after criticising

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Communicate

- definitions
 - to convey knowledge or information, make known
 - share or exchange information
- communication is not one-way:
 - speaking and listening
 - you can only communicate with people if they let you
- Larry King: “I remind myself every morning: nothing I say today will teach me anything. So if I’m going to learn, I must do it by listening.”

Ways of communicating

- have you heard of the “7%” rule?
 - words = 7%
 - tone of voice = 38%
 - body language = 55%
- communication mechanisms
 - written (including emails)
 - verbal (phone)
 - verbal and visual (Skype, FaceTime)
 - face-to-face

Push Style

Rationale behind “Push Style”

- people influenced by convincing proposals
- key to success is quality of information given
- defend your proposal as it is the only proposal
- very little common ground

“Push Style” can be effective under the following:

- immaturity or dependency
- no threat in accepting the proposal
- high degree of trust
- recognition of expertise

Pull Style – is harder to do

Rationale behind “Pull Style”

- people influenced by uncovering needs
- key to success is quality of questions asked
- seek common ground
- building on ideas & proposals
- building relationships

“Pull Style” can be effective under the following:

- strong opinions
- threat in accepting proposal
- uncertainty (play safe)
- relationship is new or mistrust
- push style has failed
- influence needs longer lasting effect
- communicating with people senior to you

Examples of push and pull

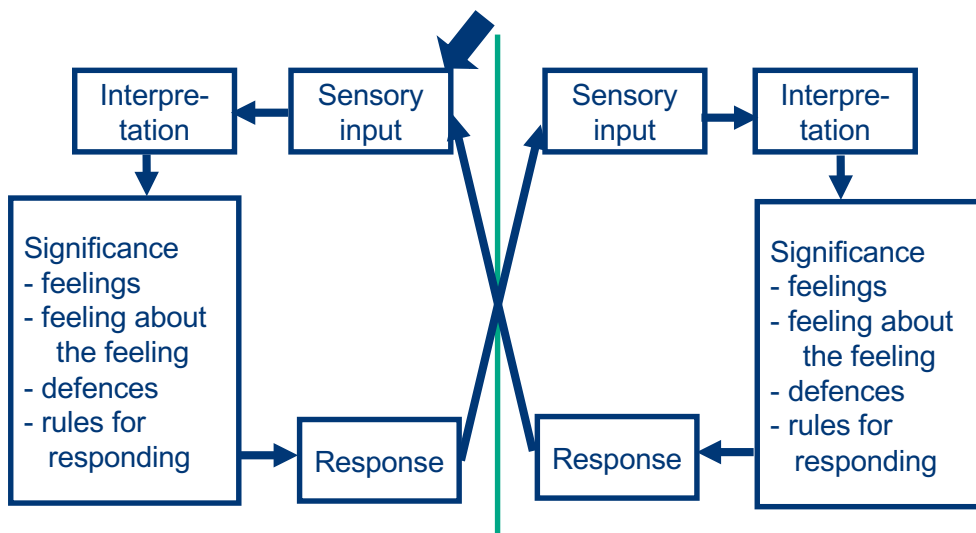
- push

- my detailed estimate: three weeks for testing
- we need another two testers for this project
- perform the tests in this order
- we need the following for the test environment
- facts / “I know best”
 - tell

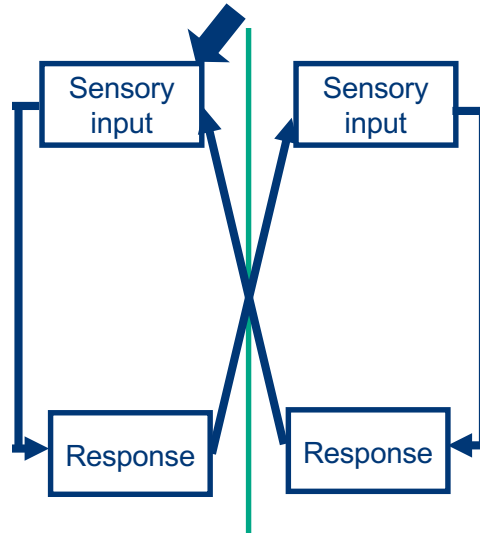
- pull

- what are the risks if we don't test thoroughly?
- how important **is** that deadline / constraints?
- what are the most important tests to do 1st?
- ok if our test environment didn't catch this type of bug?
- risks / success criteria, common ground
 - ask

Communication interaction model



What we see

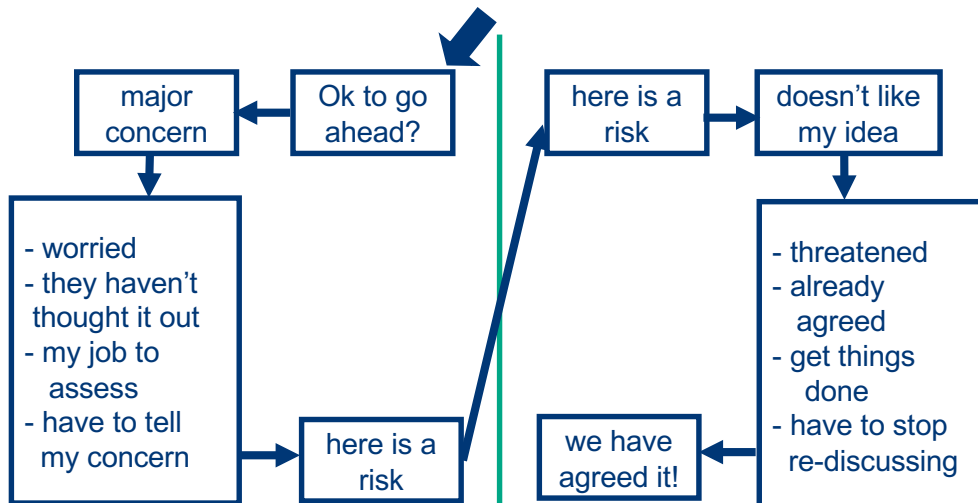


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Source: Virginia Satir, Johanna Rothman, Esther Derby (AYE conference)

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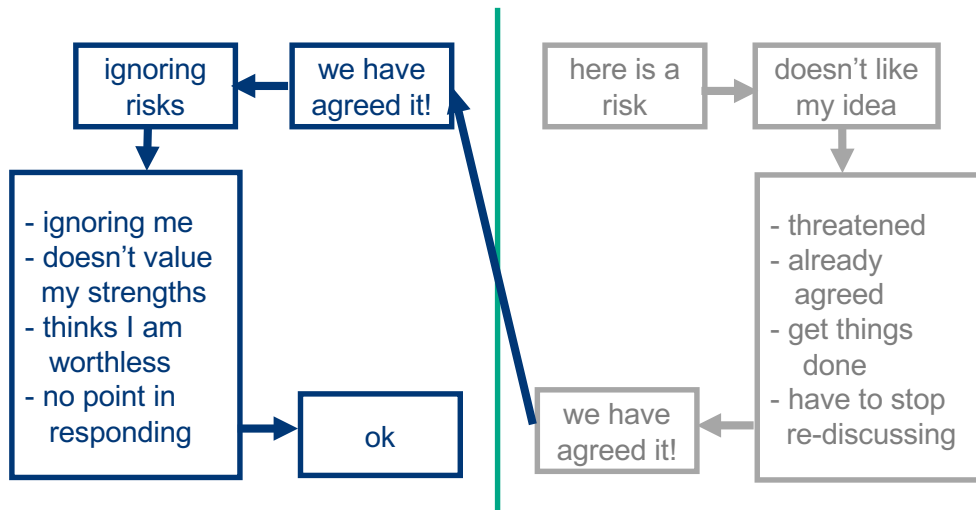
Communication interaction example - 1



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Communication interaction example - 2



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Confidence

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What is confidence (self-confidence)?

think of a time when you felt very confident

- Wikipedia definitions
 - assurance, being sure about decisions, freedom from doubt
 - belief in yourself and your abilities, firm reliance on oneself
 - a state of hopefulness that events will be favorable
 - feeling good about yourself and what you do
 - not worrying whether you did the right thing – leave previous decisions behind

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Where are you?

under-confident	confident	over-confident
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-put yourself down-negative criticism - take personally, dwell on it, make more than it is-don't believe praise-think it's one-off / luck-confidence easily damaged, crushed-limit yourself, low ambition-inaction / risk averse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-negative & positive criticism evaluated objectively-able to prove yourself to yourself & others-enjoy successes-give credit to others-open: seek feedback & act on it-realistic: abilities & limits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-blow own trumpet-ignore negative criticism-blame others-expect and seek praise-defensive-attacking-closed-ambition > ability

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What kind of tester?

- under-confident
 - not reproducible means not a defect – that's ok
 - don't stand up for the users, bow to developers
 - martyr complex? (poor me)
- over-confident
 - antagonistic – offends developers with defect report
 - I know best
- confident
 - report bugs objectively, firmly, not pushed around
 - know your value to the organization / product

What kind of test manager?

- under-confident
 - not defend estimates (targets rule) - cave in to unrealistic deadlines – “do the best I can”
 - not enforce entry, suspension or Done criteria
- over-confident
 - don't listen to others (testers, users, developers)
 - inflexible – unneeded battles, not cooperation
- confident
 - stand firm under pressure, good negotiator
 - defend the tests, recognition for testing skills

External vs internal confidence

- need to inspire confidence
 - even if you don't feel as confident inside!
- needn't match how you feel
 - you can learn to "act"
 - the more you act, the more it will become real
- techniques
 - practice feeling confident - visualization
 - especially just before a "situation"
 - you have a choice – only you control your thoughts
 - where your thoughts are, behavior will follow
 - take action, take risks

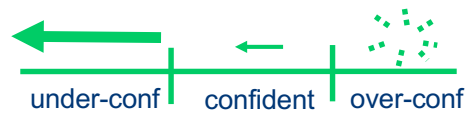
*"As you think,
so shall you be"*

How to become more confident

- increase competence?
 - training / recognition
 - measured achievement of goals
- change your view of yourself
 - appreciate yourself
 - give yourself permission to recognise your skills and abilities (& limitations), believe in yourself
 - find a mentor (who will boost your confidence)
 - subconscious mind – visualize, pretend
- take action on your ideas – be prepared to fail - and bounce back
 - inaction is the result of lack of confidence
 - lack of confidence is the result of inaction

*"The greatest
discovery
of our generation
is that
human beings
can alter their lives
by altering their
attitudes of mind"
- William James*

Summary



- be sensitive to those you criticise
- be aware of those you communicate with
- appearance of confidence inspires confidence
- take action

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Thank you!

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TestAutomationPatterns.org

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Further reading

- paper by Danielle Gaucher, Justin Friesen, and Aaron C. Kay: [Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality](#) (Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, July 2011)
 - <http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com> (analyzes your ad)
- Claire Shipman and Katty Kay, journalists. Two books: Womenomics, The Confidence Code
 - article: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/05/the-confidence-gap/359815/>
- Carol Tavris & Elliot Aronson, Mistakes were made (but not by me), Harcourt Books, 2007.
- Daniel Goleman, Social Intelligence, Arrow books, 2007.
- Patti Hathaway, Giving and Receiving Criticism: your key to interpersonal success, Crisp Publications, 1990.
- Richard Carlson, Stop Thinking, Start Living, Element, 1993.
- Critique of the “7% rule”: <http://ubiquity.acm.org/article.cfm?id=2043156>

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The Confidence Code (book-Shipman & Kay)

- “Confidence is *more important* than ability when it comes to getting ahead.”
- “if life were one long grade school, women would rule the world”
- confidence blacklist: over-thinking, people-pleasing, inability to let go of defeats / failures
- Dunning-Kruger effect:
 - the less competent over-estimate their abilities more
- women assess themselves lower than men
- confidence “cousins” self-esteem, optimism, self-compassion, self-efficacy
- confidence a better predictor of success than IQ
- confidence turns thoughts into action, life’s enabler

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