

Session-based Exploratory Testing

Reviewed by Andrew Custer

Exploratory, or ad-hoc, testing is the Rodney Dangerfield of QA methodology – it gets no respect. During the May 13 QASIG meeting presentation, Jonathan Bach deflated this notion with an overview of his Session-Based Testing method. With Session-Based Testing, a tester maximizes the value of exploratory testing by adhering to session charters – manageable, quantifiable updates of coverage extent and time outlays. The merits of the ad-hoc method are captured, while the risks are minimized, by providing test managers with a standard of measurement. Further, Bach breaks down the test cycle to three major pieces, Test, Bug, and Setup, or TBS. By leveraging a team's activities against this protocol and its related functions, managers have access to a valuable set of metrics with which to provide their clientele evidence of past activity and need for future resource requirements.

Jonathan Bach is a senior test lead at Quardev Laboratories in Seattle. He's been testing software for 8 years, half of which was for Microsoft as both contract employee and full-time test manager on Systems Management Server. Additionally, Bach worked with Satisfice, Inc. where he was lab manager and test consultant. Bach has published testing articles in STQE and Computer magazines, as well as presented testing talks at Microsoft, the University of Washington, STAR West 2000 in San Jose, and the 2001 Testing Computer Software conference in Washington, DC.