WHITE PAPER:

Beta Testing - Can you contribute as an individual?

Introduction:

A beta test is typically the last test performed by an organization prior to releasing the product. It is a test which involves real customers who use the product in real environments. It empowers a services organization to be involved in the company's product development effort and to identify critical bugs before the product is released to end customers. It enables testers and engineers from other disciplines have a chance to experience a new product firsthand and share their insights and ideas before the product is released.

About the Topic:

Beta testing has existed for several years now. In the earlier years product organizations used to push the beta versions to the selected set of users to perform beta testing; however this pattern is now changing with possible newer ways in which beta testing can be done to engage with end users.

 "Quality is much better than quantity. One home run is much better than two doubles."

By Steve Jobs

A recent example is the Beta Program of OS X Yosemite, which was introduced by Apple Inc. on 2nd June 14 at Apple's Worldwide Developer conference in San Francisco. Apple last released a beta version of its software to the public in 2000, and users had to pay for it. But this time OS X Yosemite beta program is open to the first million people who sign up and it is free for them.

Problem Analysis & challenges:

Why do companies run beta tests?

A successful beta test can have a huge impact on the success of the product and can sometimes mean the difference between success and failure for a new product. A beta test can bridge the gap between the product users and the product owners by identifying uncovered problems and other key bits of information that only an end user may be privy into. So, the return on investment in a beta test effort is often very huge.

What does it have for individuals and / or service based organizations?

So far we have discussed about the value of a beta testing engagement for product companies - now let see what is in it for software testing services companies and / or individuals.

Benefits to be reaped:

- A variant from core software testing efforts bring in a new, add on touch to the quality of the product under test
- Enhanced test experience that builds a better brand for the organization
- Improved contribution to product quality
- Better visibility with the client for whom the testing engagement is conducted (if this is a contracted engagement with a client)

How to participate & what Approach to follow:

It is fairly simple to participate in beta test programs – all it calls for is commitment in terms of time and effort and the due diligence to identify the right programs and enroll in them.

Personally, I have taken the initiative and enrolled myself in the above program by Apple this year. I have tested as part of this program and have submitted defects which Apple has acknowledged as issues. This gives me immense satisfaction as a tester helping me on varied fronts – including enhancing my testing skills, boosting my confidence as a tester, satisfying my quench to contribute to the community of testers in building better products etc.

Such beta testing efforts can be taken on by an individual on his own voluntary pull. Else, a group of testing enthusiasts in an organization can join hands to form a small crowd organizing regular bug hunting events not just for such external betas but even for other internal ongoing test efforts.

CONCLUSION:

Beta testing is often a task taken up with passion. It requires a lot of commitment from the individual or the group that it taking it on. However it goes a long way in building one's own testing resume as well as the organization he/she represents and can sometimes have a very far reaching positive impact – for example, TestFlight has now become an Apple acknowledged platform to test your iOS apps before they are released on the App store. So, if you are passionate about software testing, taking the time now to see if there are any interested beta testing opportunities you can participate in.

Remember **"Quality does not happen by accident; it has to be planned."**

Be a part of a quality product by enrolling into such programs.

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At QA InfoTech (an ISO 9001:2008, 20000-1:2005, 27001:2005 and CMMI Level III certified company), we specialize in providing independent offshore software testing and, unbiased software quality assurance services to product companies, ranging from the Fortune 500s to start-up companies.

Established in 2003, with less than five testing experts, QA InfoTech has grown leaps and bounds with five QA Centers of Excellence globally; three of which are located in the hub of IT activity in India, Noida, one in Chandigarh, India and the other, our affiliate QA InfoTech Inc. Michigan USA. In 2010 and 2011, QA InfoTech has been ranked in the top 100 places to work for in India. For more details, please refer to our blog on this event.

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- **Mukesh Sharma, Founder & Chief Executive Officer**

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