March 2002—
The Software Quality Advisor

The Software Quality Advisor Online

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How Are We Doing?

This article is in two parts. The first part discussed the nature of organizations, models and assessments. This second part discusses how to objectively and quickly determine how your IT organization is performing and how to show short-term and sustained results.

- Self-assessment is not enough
- Points of measurement
- Internal Measures
- External measures
- Designing the survey
- How to gather the results
- How to compile the results
- How to make sense of the results

Inside this issue:

How Are We Doing?

by Randall W. Rice, CQA, CSTE

This is part 2 of a 2 part article. Look for part 1 in the February edition of The Software Quality Advisor

In Part 1 of this article, I discussed the Capability Maturity Model (CMM) and how prevalent it has become in assessing an organization's performance. This is good news in terms of raising awareness of the importance of processes. However, for some organizations that will never go above level 1, it makes me wonder if it makes sense to measure them against the five-level CMM.

We discussed the nature of organizations, the nature of assessments, and the nature of models in part 1. I related the example of a simple hotel survey that read "How are we Doing?" at the top of the survey card. Although assessing your IT organization's performance may be more involved than assessing a hotel's performance, there are some points in common. The main point is that the survey does not have to the involved to be effective.

The Assessment Process

Self-assessment is Not Enough

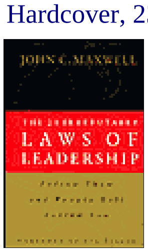
There are two views to this assessment – Internal (Our View of How We are Doing) and External (Our Customers' and Users' View of How We are Doing). It is important to consider both views as we may think we're doing great, but those we serve may have a different perception. This assessment can also identify where the perceptions differ within the organization.

(continued on pg. 6)

Book Review—The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership:

Follow Them and People Will Follow You—by John C. Maxwell

Format:
Hardcover, 233pp.



ISBN: 0785274316
Publisher: Thomas Neilson
Pub. Date: September 1998

Reviewer: Carl J. Chandler

Overview

This book is not a "become a great leader in 5 easy steps" book it is a book that takes lessons learned from real life situations and people. The 21 laws are principles of leadership that when applied to your life will increase your leadership abilities.

I found this to be an easy read because of the practical examples used to define each principal.

(continued on pg. 2)

Book Review—The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: **Follow Them and People Will Follow You** —by John C. Maxwell, continued...

What I Liked About the Book
I liked the way John Maxwell used real life situations to teach each leadership principal. Based on this I found the book to be an easy read.

The content was very thorough and covered all of the principals of a good leader. These principals have been proven over time to be reliable and true.

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership is well organized and the style is clear and goes directly to the point.

Content

Law #1—The Law of the Lid—Leadership Ability Determines a Person's Level of Effectiveness

Law #2—The Law of Influence—The True Measure of Leadership is Influence—Nothing More, Nothing Less

Law #3—The Law of Process—Leadership Develops Daily, Not in a Day

Law #4—The Law of Navigation—Anyone Can Steer the Ship, But It Takes a Leader to Chart the Course

Law #5—The Law of E.F. Hutton—When the Real Leader Speaks, People Listen

Law #6—The Law of Solid Ground—Trust Is the Foundation of Leadership

Law #7—The Law of Respect—People Naturally Follow Leaders Stronger Than Themselves

Law #8—The Law of Intuition—Leaders Evaluate Everything with a leadership Bias

Law #9—The Law of Magnetism—Who You Are Is Who You Attract

Law #10—The Law of Connection—Leaders Touch a Heart Before They Ask for a Hand

Law #11—The Law of the Inner Circle—A Leader's Potential Is Determined by Those Closest to Him

Law #12—The Law of Empowerment—Only Secure Leaders Give Power to Others

Law #13—The Law of Reproduction—It Takes a Leader to Raise Up a Leader

Law #14—The Law of Buy-In—People Buy Into the Leader, Then the Vision

Law #15—The Law of Victory—Leaders Find a Way for the Team to Win

Law #16—The Law of the Big Mo—Momentum Is a Leader's Best Friend

Law #17—The Law of Priorities—Leaders Understand That Activity Is Not Necessarily Accomplishment

Law #18—The Law of Sacrifice—A Leader Must Give Up to Go Up

Law #19—The Law of Timing—When to Lead Is As Important As What to Do and Where to Go

Law #20—The Law of Explosive Growth—To Add Growth, Lead Followers—To Multiply, Lead Leaders

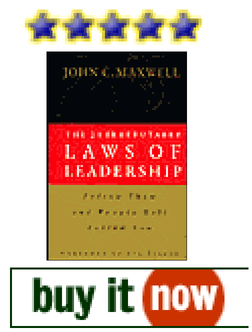
Law #21—The Law of Legacy—A Leader's Lasting Value is Measured by Succession

Scoring
Readability - 5
Breadth of coverage – 5
Depth of discussion - 5
Accuracy - 5
Credibility - 5
Organization - 5
Overall Score – 5

Summary

All of these principals would have to be learned by a leader the hard way—by trial and error—if not put together in an easy to read and understand, practical format. The bottom line—learn from other's lessons and use this book as a springboard.

Reviewer
Carl J. Chandler



Conflict Resolution as a Team Leader
By Carl J. Chandler

Conflict resolution as a team leader can be difficult, to say the least. The best way to handle conflict is to use the same process each time and as you do it will get easier. Not to say it will ever be easy because easy is a relative term.

The first step in the process is to determine just how bad the conflict is. At a recent seminar on leadership by John Maxwell, he pointed out the five stages of a conflict:

1) The Remedy Stage – People have:
   - Recognition of the problem
   - Disagreement on solution
   - Commitment to solve it
   - Belief it can be solved
   - Communication honest

   In this stage conflict has an 80%-85% chance of being resolved. People know there is a problem, they all want it fixed, they all know it can be fixed, and communication is generally honest. Remember, everyone's truth is skewed by their own perception. The only real conflict is - how do we fix it.

2) The repositioning stage
   - Focus shifts to others
   - People are nervous
   - Conversation comes generalized and somewhat negative
   - Trust level lowers
   - Communication is cautious and vague

   This stage of conflict has about a 10% chance of being resolved without serious pain to someone. This is the stage that people start to place blame. Because blame is being placed, a person's natural reaction is to protect himself resulting in a lower level of trust and vague generalized statements that seem to point the finger at someone else.

3) The "I'm right" stage, "I'm right so you must be wrong."
   - People take sides
   - People are labeled
   - Focus switches from resolving to winning
   - Communication is overstated and out of proportion

   This stage of conflict has a 5% chance of being resolved peacefully. At this point we no longer have a team, it's "us" vs. "them".

4) The removal stage. "Get rid of them!"
   - The GOAL is now separation
   - People are in different camps
   - Each camp has a leader
   - No trust

   This stage has an even smaller chance of being resolved and becoming a team again. Each new "team" wants to get rid of the other.

5) The revenge stage "someone must pay"
   - People become fanatics
   - People feel it would be immoral to stop the fight
   - Each side believes they have the moral high ground, "God is on my side"
   - Conflict is out of bounds with "seek and destroy" missions.

   This has an almost 0% chance of salvaging the "team". Is this a troubled team or a trouble making team? Ask yourself:

   - Is the conflict continuous?
   - Are the same people causing conflict?
   - Is the opposition strategic?
   - Is the team out to destroy the leader?

If your team is in the first stage of conflict ACT NOW. If left alone it will deteriorate to the next stage and so on. It's not time to stick your head in the sand and hope it will go away.

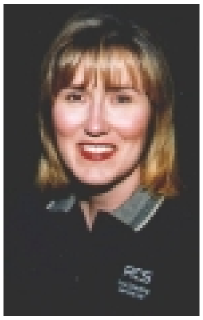
First, to resolve the conflict speak the truth with tact, objectivity, and compassion. People need to know the truth before they can accurately change, but they don't need to be kicked in the teeth with the truth. The truth, given correctly, will help lower their defenses. Second, seek to understand each other's point of view. As the old saying goes "you don't know someone until you have walked a mile in their shoes" or as Randy always says your perception is reality, until reality changes your perception.

Third, seek common ground. For instance, in software development the developer sees the tester as nit picking and holding up progress. The tester sees the developer as the ones giving them the entire responsibility for the quality of the software. The fight is on! The leader needs to communicate the fact that we all want the best for our customers - now how do we do this as a team?

Fourth, make your desires and expectations clear. In the case above the developer did not understand the expectation of the leader - that was, that testing was to be completed at the developer level as well as at the tester level. (continued on pg. 11)

Interviewing Techniques—Part I—A Team Leaders Perspective

By Suzanne Chandler



Putting together your team, in my opinion, is the most important step in any project. John Maxwell teaches in his book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership – Follow Them and People Will Follow You*, that a leader's potential is determined by those closest to him. If the people are strong, then the leader can make a huge impact. If they are weak, he can't.

There are five characteristics of people you should be looking to bring on to your team that can add tremendous value to your organization, your team, and you as a leader.

1. Self-motivated. People who are self-motivated make a strong asset to the team. They keep the pace moving and generally are able to lead themselves with little supervision.
2. Morale raisers. People who lift others up when they need a boost. Of course this does not mean cover for them or do their job but a person that will encourage others when they are discouraged.
3. Solid supporter of the leader. As the leader you should have a person-a friend on the team that challenges you and helps you to be a better leader.
4. Team motivator. – I had a developer on my team who, although I considered him the best I had, never tooted his own horn. He always spoke highly to me of the other developers and helped them realize their full potential. He would challenge them to be more than they knew themselves to be.
5. Leaders. John Schnatter – founder of Papa John's Pizza – says, "It's my job to build the people who are going to build the company."

Hire the best staff you can find, develop them as much as you can, and hand off everything you possibly can to them.

Through interviewing you can find the best players for your team. In this article we will discuss:

- The purpose of the interview
- Preparing for the interview
- Types of interviews
- Opening the interview
- Closing the interview
- Follow-ups

The Purpose of the Interview

An interview allows the employer to find out about the candidate's skills, personality, knowledge, motivation, and if the candidate will fit into the team and the company. One of the shortest interviews I held was for a developer position. The candidate appeared in ripped up blue jeans and a t-shirt with a marijuana leaf on the front. His dress told me that the interview was not important to him and that he didn't care whether he made a good impression or not…so I have to assume that means the job isn't that important to him.

The interview also allows the candidate to gain a better understanding of the position, the organization, and to determine if the position fits their life personally and professionally.

Preparing for the Interview

As an interviewer you should be ready to answer questions by the candidate about the company, the project, the position.

- Know your company:
  - How the company was established.
  - Is the company an industry leader.
  - What is the goal of the company over the next 1-5 years?
  - What are factors affecting your company today?
  - Has the company been impacted by a recession?
  - The locations of the company.
  - Number of employees total and at the facility where the position is.
  - Revenue for prior year, growth, cash potential and acquisition potential.
  - Products or service offerings.
  - The organizational structure.
  - Company nature. Since everyone – almost everyone – dresses up for an interview including the interviewers it would be fair for the candidate to question dress code. Candidates will also be interested in company hours, benefits, training programs, and possibly company sports teams, etc.).
  - Advancement potential.
  - Are stock shares available to employees?

Robert Parker, a Human Resource director, offers the following comment on discussing the company with the candidate, "Care should be given in describing the company. Managers can get carried away and overstate the job or company. Phrases like, 'We are going to be around forever' or 'This project is good for 5 years' , may come back to haunt an employer. It has been determined that these statements imply continuation of employment or an employment agreement. Basically, stay away from comments that define employment duration as these are contradictory to employment at will."

(continued on page 12…)

Links to Recommended Web Sites

Job Interviewer Techniques and Tips

http://www.crfonline.org/orc/ca/ca-14.html

http://www.cadvision.com/rgrant/exp2.htm

http://www.connectionsgroup.co.uk/about/interview_client.html

http://www.searchwest.com/interviewer.html

Survey Techniques

http://www.deakin.edu.au/~agoodman/sci101/chap8.html

http://ericae.net/pare/getvn.asp?v=5&n=3

http://www.zephryus.demon.co.uk/geography/resources/fieldwork/stats/ques.html

http://www.statpac.com/surveys/

Research Methods Resources on the Web

http://www.slais.ubc.ca/resources/research_methods/question.htm

The Software Quality Advisor:

http://www.riceconsulting.com/SQAdvisornew.htm

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Check out our web site picks for this month...

Notable Quotes

"Action may not always bring happiness; but there is no happiness without action."
-Benjamin Disraeli

"The Constitution only gives people the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself."
-Ben Franklin

"Here is the test to find whether your mission on Earth is finished: if you're alive, it isn't."
-Richard Bach

"The fearless are merely fearless. People who act in spite of their fear are truly brave."
-James A. LaFond-Lewis

"He who does not have the courage to speak up for his rights cannot earn the respect of others."
-René G. Torres

"Every problem has a gift for you in its hands."
-Richard Bach

"When I hear somebody sigh, 'Life is hard,' I am always tempted to ask, 'Compared to what?'"
-Sydney Harris

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the difference between a Unit Test and any other test? Also, where can we find quality assurance in the testing process?

R: 1) Unit testing is performed at the unit or module level. Instead of testing an entire system or application, you are just testing one unit of it, such as a user interface or a batch procedure. Therefore, the tests will consist of things like detailed edits, calculations, etc. One important part of unit testing is testing the coding instructions. This is called structural testing. If the developer of the unit does not perform structural testing, there is little likelihood anyone else will, either. Structural testing makes sure there are no memory violations, invalid branches, endless loops, fall-through conditions, etc.

2) Testing is a part of Quality Assurance (QA), but QA is much more than just testing. Unfortunately, many people use the term QA without knowing what it really means. QA is the assurance that all quality-related activities are being performed correctly. QA is preventative in nature, testing is corrective in nature (though it should not be considered debugging). QA also includes process definition and deployment, standards definition, measurements, testing, inspections, training, and any other quality-related activities. So, testing is part of the QA process, not the other way around.

Q: Please define the difference between software release number and version number.

R: I don't know that there is a standard definition of these terms. In my experience, the version number is a major number, such as v2.0, v2.5, even v3.4a. The software release number is sometimes used as a secondary number when a major version is released more than once. A great real life example of this was Windows 98, which had releases 1 and 2. Also, another example is Windows NT 4, which had 4 service packs.

Do you have a question for Randy?

Write to him at:
rcs@telepath.com

How Are We Doing? , cont.

While self-assessments can help us identify strengths and weaknesses in our performance, the self-view is inherently biased, even if performed by an independent third party. An independent assessment is more objective than one performed by the organization, however, the assessor(s) are at some points dependent on the information they obtain from within the organization.

Points of Measurement

In this informal assessment, there are more internal than external measures. This is because we want to keep the assessment short and simple for the customer, but also because there are many things the customer can't rate, such as problem solving.

Keep in mind that this assessment is a sample starting point. You can add or delete criteria as appropriate to your organization's needs. The overall objective is for the assessment to be simple, especially for the customer.

Internal Measures

Responsiveness
- Timeliness
- Delivering what was requested

Teamwork
- Cooperation

Communication
- Lines
- Accessibility
- Common Terminology
- Directions

Problem Solving
- Definition

Learning
- Measurement
- Reflection/Review

Practices
- Consistency
- Awareness

Competency
- Management
- Team

Leadership
- Vision
- Influence
- Commitment to Goals
- Commitment to Quality
- Commitment to Customers

External Measures

Responsiveness
- Timeliness
- Delivering what was requested

Communication
- Lines
- Accessibility

Teamwork
- Cooperation with customer

Competency
- Management
- Team

Practices
- Consistency

Designing the Survey

Simplicity is the goal, so with that objective in mind, here is how I have created a sample survey.

(continued…)

"An independent assessment is more objective than one performed by the organization, however, the assessor(s) are at some points dependent on the information they obtain from within the organization."

How Are We Doing? , cont.

Designing the Survey

Simplicity is the goal, so with that objective in mind, here is how I have created a sample survey.

Sample survey can be found on page 18-21.

How to Gather Results

The sample survey questions are written to be answered in the context of a single project. The ideal time to gather this kind of information would be in a project retrospective or post-project review. To track progress, an assessment could be performed at the end of every project.

If your organization doesn't work on a project basis or if you just want to get an overall snapshot of your performance, you can change the wording of the questions to a present tense. I recommend the project assessment, if possible, as it gives people something tangible to think about in answering the questions.

You can distribute the survey to people individually, or have people fill them out during a project review or retrospective.

How to Compile the Results

After you have gathered the survey results, you can use a spreadsheet to record all of the responses. The spreadsheet will give you the capability to average and chart the responses.

(continued on page 8…)

Web-Based Learning
On-Line Structured User Acceptance Training

Learn more about this exciting training course on page 15!

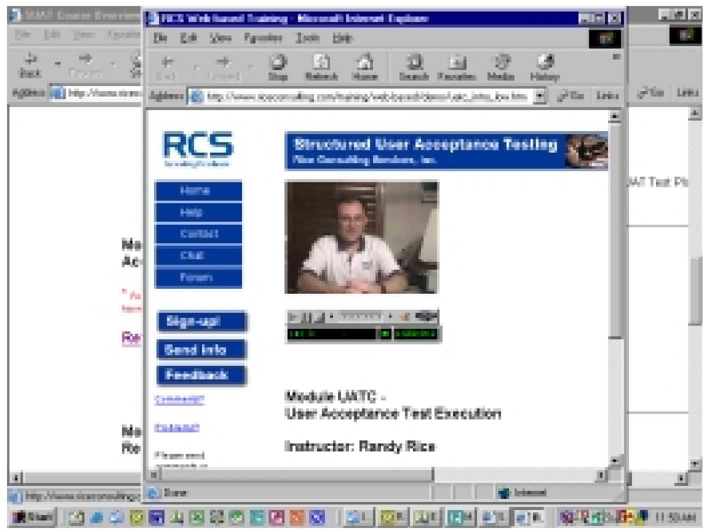
Rice Consulting Services, Inc. is excited to announce the availability of one of our most popular courses online!

You can now experience the Structured User Acceptance Testing course wherever you have an Internet connection whenever you want to view it.

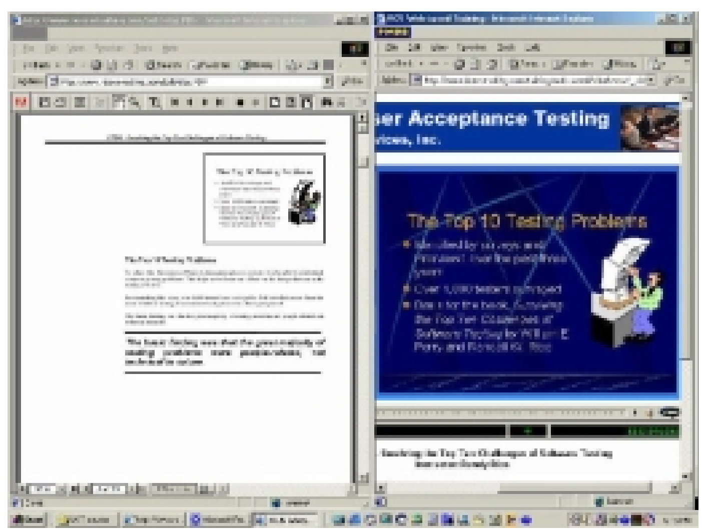
Our Online Training is almost like having Randy training you at your desk!

Web-Based Learning
On-Line Structured User Acceptance Training

The objective of this course is to teach you how to plan, conduct and evaluate a test that will give you confidence that the system will meet your needs in the real world.
Don't worry - you do not need to be a professional tester to plan and perform this kind of testing. Randy Rice will lead you through the steps of this process just like he has done in person for thousands of other people. Randy has planned and facilitated many user acceptance tests for all kinds of organizations, so he knows the traps and pitfalls, as well as how to succeed!



Training includes….streaming video…...



…….an on-line course book…...PowerPoint slides…..

How Are We Doing? , cont.

How to Make Sense of the Results

For this kind of survey, a simple bar chart is fine to show the results. Each major point of assessment can be a bar (Figure 1). It is easy to show the results of several assessments on a single bar chart (Figure 2). You can also show your goals on the chart.

Figure 1-

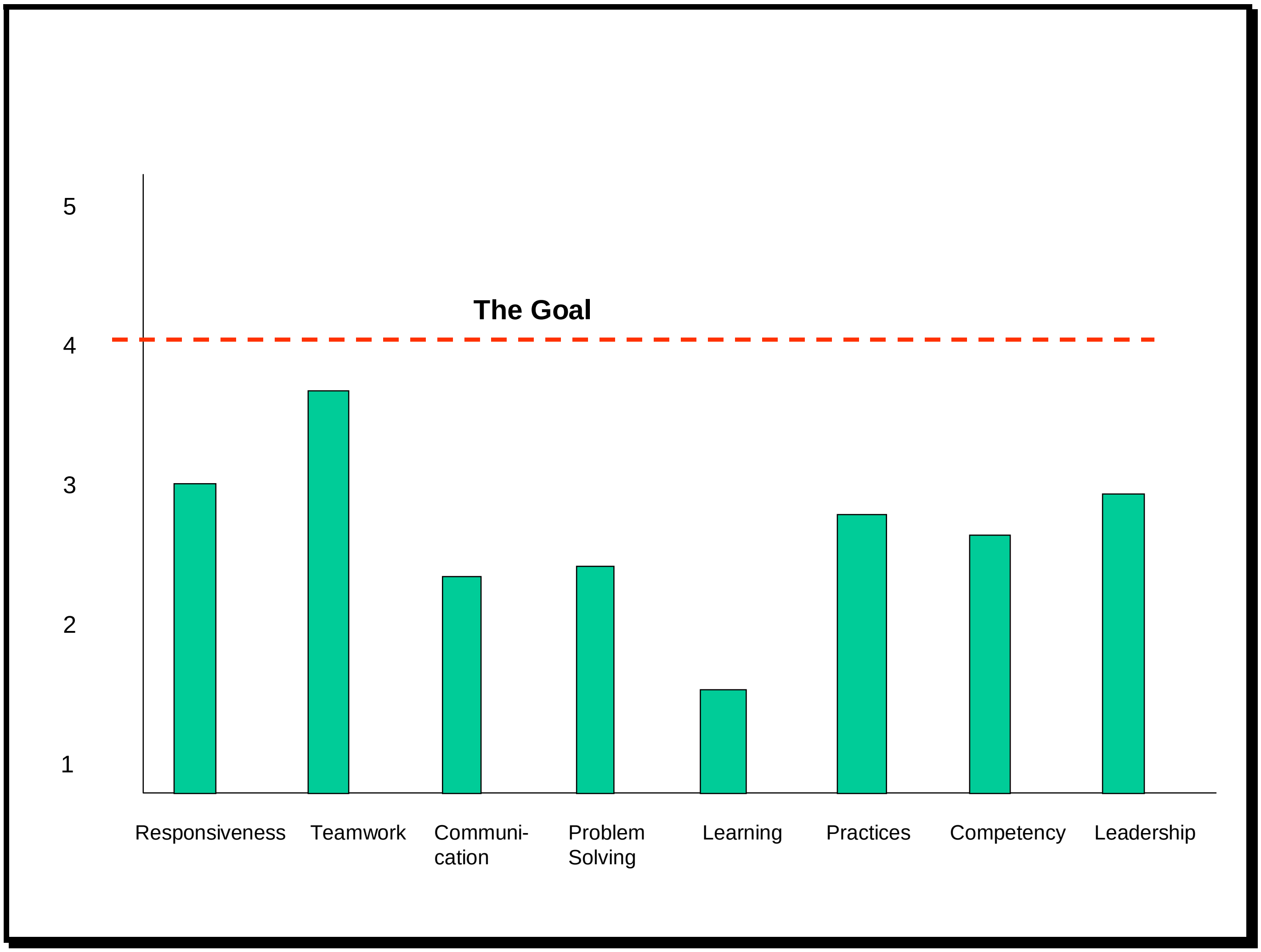


Figure 1 – The First Assessment Results on a Bar Chart (Baseline)

Your first assessment will be your initial baseline. Your initial baseline might be low, but that's alright. The important thing is to be able to have a way to compare future assessments. I

would recommend not looking to other organizations to benchmark with on this assessment because their environments and customers are different than yours.

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How Are We Doing? , cont.

Figure 2—

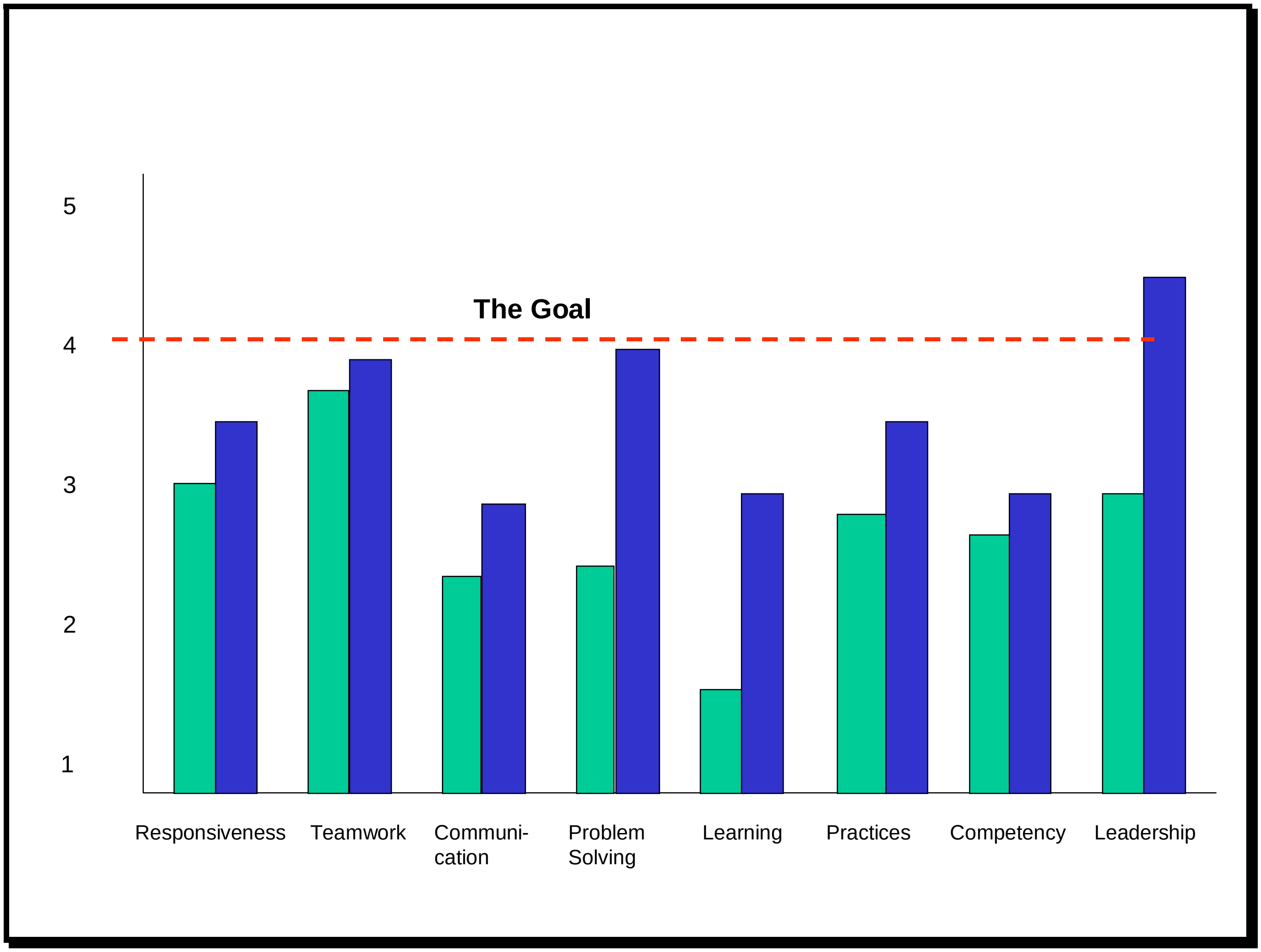

Figure 2 – Comparison of Assessment Results to a Baseline

A Final Word of Warning

It is possible to go overboard with measurements and this technique is no exception. One thing that really irritates me is to be the respondent of a survey where the surveyor seems more concerned with getting the numbers recorded instead of listening to how I feel about a recent situation. You may find that listing to a single customer complaint reveals more information than this little survey scorecard.

(continued on page 11…)

Rice Consulting Services—2002—Schedule of Events

June 10-12, 2002—Kansas City, Missouri

http://www.riceconsulting.com/KansasCity2002.htm

August 14-16, 2002 — Chicago, Illinois

http://www.riceconsulting.com/chicagoq3_2002.htm

A Three-day course in User-Oriented Practices for Delivering Quality Software—Now, more than ever before, more responsibility is being placed on software users to define and validate the systems they acquire. This three-day course presents two important sides of user involvement in software projects: gathering and documenting user requirements, and testing from the user perspective.

April 10-11, 2002—White Plains, New York

http://www.riceconsulting.com/newyork2002.htm

April 16-17, 2002 — Phoenix, Arizona

http://www.riceconsulting.com/phoenix2002.htm

A Two-day course in Becoming an Effective Test Team Leader—Sometimes people feel intimidated by the technical aspects of software testing and lack the confidence they need to be credible test leaders in their organization. Learn the issues and processes for effectively testing software by attending this hands-on course.

May 8-10, 2002 — Chicago, Illinois

http://www.riceconsulting.com/chicagoq2_2002.htm

November 13-15, 2002 — Chicago, Illinois

http://www.riceconsulting.com/chicagoq4_2002.htm

A Three-day course in Web Testing Techniques
Because of recent increased demand for these courses on web-based testing, we are offering this training in Chicago to accommodate those that are looking for a complete and reasonable priced course.

This offering is actually a combination of three one-day sessions, which focus on many aspects of web testing.

Day 1 - A Web Testing Overview presents the overall process and tools for testing web applications in a variety of environment, not just e-commerce.

Day 2 - E-Commerce and Security Testing presents a complete process for testing e-commerce sites, along with a bonus module for testing web security.

Day 3 - Testing Web Technology digs deeper into how to test the technologies that power many web applications.

How Are We Doing? , cont.

Summary

There are many ways to measure your organization's performance. You may choose the CMM or any number of other frameworks and models. The assessment in this article is to give a way to those who want a simple way to know how they are doing and want to improve.

If you decide to use this assessment, be sure and let me know how it goes for you.

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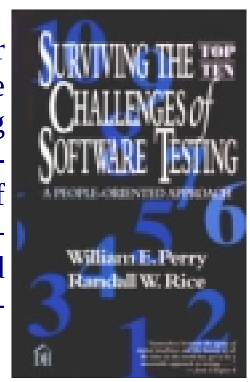
Randall W. Rice is a leading author, speaker and consultant in the field of software testing and software quality.

Randy Rice's Bio

Randall W. Rice is a leading author, speaker and consultant in the field of software testing and software quality. Rice, a Certified Quality Analyst (CQA) and Certified Software Test Engineer (CSTE) has worked with organizations worldwide to improve the quality of their information systems and automate their testing processes.

Mr. Rice has over 25 years experience building and testing mission-critical projects in a variety of environments, including defense and private sector projects.



"Until you talk to your customers, you never know for sure how you're doing in serving them."

Conflict Resolution as a Team Leader, cont.

Fifth, stay focused! People will tend to get you off track just to avoid the pain involved in resolving the conflict. Remember if you are chasing two things at once you probably will not catch either.

Sixth, maintain direct communication. No middleman! A middleman can only cause communication to become distorted.

Seventh, listen! Remember, God gave you two ears and one mouth…use them proportionately. Pay attention to nonverbal clues and jot down notes while others talk so you won't interrupt.

Eighth, do not act defensively. Admit the mistakes that you contributed to the conflict.

Ninth, make a commitment to what is in the best interest to the team. You have come this far and now is not the time to be selfish.

Tenth, reflect in the lessons learned and apply it to the team.

In conclusion, conflict resolution is never easy because of the emotional nature of conflict. Remember that the best way to handle conflict is to use the same process each time. In spite of the difficulties stick to the process and start early - you can get through it.

Interviewing Techniques—Part I—A Team Leaders Perspective, cont.

- Know the project:

  What about your project would pique the interest of a candidate?
  - What technologies are you using today?
  - How are these technologies applied?
  - What type of equipment are you using?
  - How much creative freedom is allowed?
  - Is it a team environment or more individual?
  - Is there advancement potential within the project?

- Know the position:

  Develop a job description. Check with your Human Resources department to see if they have a current job description that you can use or a similar one to help you get started. Once completed you should have the Human Resources department review and approve the job description.

  - Define the type of role – whether it is a leadership, technical, or clerical role.
  - Define the level (i.e. junior or senior).
  - Define the tasks you need accomplished *now* and the skills associated with that task. What education or experience is required. Be reasonable. You can't expect a person to have 5-10 years experience in a technology that is brand new.
  - Define the tasks you need accomplished *later* and the skills associated with that task. What education or experience is required. If the person is not qualified for these tasks today but they are competent then you need to determine if you have the time and ability to train them?
  - Define the personality traits required for the position. If it is a leadership position then you could possibly list; integrity, patience, communication skills, listening skills, vision, respectful, fair, concerned, unselfish, courageous, charisma, motivator, devoted, team player, forgiving, honest, humble.
  - Define the expected deliverables and their frequency. (i.e. detailed status reports due weekly, update of current test results to the team leader on a daily basis, etc.)
  - Define travel requirements.
  - Define working environment (team, individual).
  - Define performance criteria.

A location for the interview should be decided upon. However, the type of interview given may determine this. Types of interviews will be discussed in the next section. Be sure there are enough seats for the interviewers and the candidate. The area should be well lit and free from interruption unless you are using the interruptions to observe the candidates reaction. Interviewers should all be waiting for the candidate when he arrives. Be sure everyone has tools for taking notes. "Take care with the notes. Don't use the resume as a note pad." offers Bob Parker.

Questions should be developed and the same questions should be asked of each candidate. Follow-up questions to each question may vary from candidate to candidate and most likely will.

There are protected subjects in an interview that include: race, religion, age, marital status, gender (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, family status, national or ethnic origin, handicap or disability. Do not ask illegal questions such as:

- "What is your maiden name?"
- "Is your spouse subject to transfer?"
- "What religious holidays will you be unable to work?"
- "Are you planning to have children?"
- "Where did you learn to speak English?"
- "Tell me about the health problems you have had in the past."
- "Where were you born?"
- "When did you graduate from high school?"

Sample questions that are acceptable can be found in your Human Resources department or on the web. Here are a few sites with general questions:

http://www.job-interview-questions.com/list.htm
http://www.alec.co.uk/interview/gentips.htm
http://www.careerbuilder.com/gh_int_htg_questions.html
http://content.monster.com/jobinfo/interview/questions/

Use questions that will help you find a person that will meet the criteria you listed above. Categorize your questions into groups that will help you with your analysis following the interview. For example, you will have some questions that are technical, some will help understand the candidate's personality, and some questions are critical. That is to say that that their response to the questions may take them out of the running (i.e. unavailability to travel in a position that requires travel, etc.)

Once questions have been developed you should have the Human Resource department review and approve them before beginning the interview process. Have a response sheet for each person interviewing with a list of the questions, what individual will ask which question, space for any response they want to note, and a space for additional information like body language. Keep the notes short otherwise the candidate will be more concerned about what your writing than their responses.

(continued…)

Interviewing Techniques—Part I—A Team Leaders Perspective, cont.

If you plan to administer a test to the candidates on their technical competency be sure that it is a valid test and is appropriate for the job. Some tests have been challenged in court so be sure you have your Human Resources Department review the test prior to the interview. It is important not take advantage of the candidates by gaining free work from them as this may not be viewed as ethical.

Give your test to other employees in the same field. The test should be simple but still able to identify those persons who lack the skills needed for the position or those who have exaggerated the truth on their application. Many people are not exaggerating on purpose they just base their skill level on what and who they know. After reviewing the test they may excuse themselves from the interview. Always be polite and thank them for their time. The test may also identify persons who are prone to anger. It is often a good idea if you plan to use a test in the interview to have a qualified Human Resources representative present who can tactfully end the interview and remove the person from the interview and the building. Qualified candidates should be able to breeze through the test within a few minutes.

You may want to requests samples of the candidates work. Be sure you are specific in your request. Understand that the candidate could be from a company that does not allow their materials to be shared or removed from the building. If they are still employed you might ask if they will request samples with enough changes to the information that the company will not be revealed and the information will not be enough to give away too much information. If they are unemployed you could ask them to develop smaller samples of their work for your review.

Dress to reflect your company and management style. If professional business attire is appropriate in the office then you should dress accordingly. If the company nature is more laid back and employees wear jeans and polo shirts then you have to make the call as to whether you want to dress the way you expect the candidate to dress for an interview or to dress casually and send a message from the beginning to the candidate. Most coached candidates will dress professionally for an interview. Most will dress up more for the interview than for their daily job. Keep this in mind when the guy with the marijuana t-shirt shows up.

Types of Interviews

- Unstructured Interviews – These types of interviews are casual and can take place at a job fair or when you meet or are introduced to someone who seems to have potential to better your team. Be prepared with questions that will provide you with a quick insight into that person. Determine whether you would like to have a formal interview with the person.
- One-on-One Interviews - Candidates are interviewed by one person. You should have a series of prepared questions.
- Team or Panel/Board Interviews - Candidates are interviewed by two or more individuals. This process is commonly used by governments and large organizations. I used this approach because our team was small enough and required a team approach to complete our project on time. Parker suggests that “Care should be given during this type of interview to allow the candidate thinking time. When more than a couple of members of the team are present, its difficult for the candidate to establish and maintain clear and comfortable communication.” To get the best from the candidate you should maintain a very comfortable style. Avoid an inquisition style interview.
- Group Interviews – To test interpersonal skills several candidates are brought together in a group situation to solve a problem. Candidates are tested on their ability to work in a team environment. You will be able to see how they present information to other people, offer suggestions, relate to other ideas, and work to solve a problem.
- Telephone Interviews – These are generally held when a candidate is out of the local area and can not travel in. I find these interviews to be the most difficult and steer clear when I can. However, if you must complete this type of an interview be sure your questions are open-ended so that you can respond to their answer with follow-up questions to probe deep enough so that you can learn more about the person since you will be unable to watch body language, etc. Avoid questions with “yes” or “no” answers. Speak clearly so the person has a fair chance to hear and understand the question. Expect the person to repeat the question for clarity. I usually try to hold this type of interview in a conference room with a speakerphone at least one more person to help me listen for clues about the person that I may miss. Always introduce all people in the room with you and let them know if you are going to tape the conversation. Parker adds, “This technique is best used for general screening or pre-screening candidates. This is sometimes used in Human Resource before recommendations of candidates go to managers. I would not rely too much on technical content gained from this type of interview. I’ve been on both sides of this interview. I’m too suspicious of folks to be very comfortable with this. On the other-hand, I’ve always performed very well in these types of interviews. I usually have the kitchen table covered with notes and articles to help me respond to anticipated questions. Savvy candidates can pull this one off with no trouble.”
- Dinner Interviews - Decide in advance if the interview will be structured, informal, or socially situated. What they eat and what they drink will tell you something about them. Parker suggests that you “watch out for a candidate that orders a double scotch on the rocks with a beer chaser.”

(continued…)

Interviewing Techniques—Part I—A Team Leaders Perspective, cont.

Remember, that works both ways. Ask the candidate to order first to see if they are decisive. This setting allows for more casual discussion which will help you learn more about the person but remember to use your interview questions too.

- Follow-up Interviews - Invite management applicants that you are seriously considering from the initial set of interviews to a follow-up meeting with your middle or senior management. A second set of questions that are more in-depth should be asked. If you are looking for a developer you may way to have a follow-up interview with your team of developers. This may include a skills test. If a skills test was given in the initial interview this one should be more difficult than the first. Expect the candidate to have a greater level of preparation.

Opening The Interview

Introduce yourself and offer a handshake. Open up with conversation that will put the candidate at ease so that they are more relaxed and able to think about the questions you are asking. Maintain eye contact throughout the interview. Take good notes on body language and responses to questions and small talk. Include notes on attitudes, side comments, and the type of small talk. Parker suggests that you "always remember—the notes you take are discoverable. Don't put anything down in writing that you would not want read out-loud to the candidate or anyone else (judge)." During an initial conversation with one gentleman he began to tell our interview team how he was stressed out at his last job. He began to get angry and tell us how he would not work a full time job ever again. We all began looking around for doors and windows to escape through in case he got violent.

Explain a little about your company. Allow the candidate to ask you questions so that you can see what type of research they have done on your company. Give a general description of your project, and even about your team. You want to sell the person on the company, the project, and the position but you really don't know the person you are interviewing and if you are in a high tech market you don't want to give away the farm to someone who will take it and run. Talk about the position you are trying to fill and allow them the opportunity to ask questions.

Before starting with the interview questions take just a few minutes to review any documentation they brought with them that you requested. Don't spend too much time on this since you can review the information following the interview. A quick review may help with follow-on questions.

Begin asking your interview questions. Each person acting as an interviewer should know what questions he or she are responsible for before the interview even begins.

Determine before the interview begins where the best point is to administer your test to the candidate. When administering the test set a time limit that will not panic the candidate but will still keep the interview to a manageable time.

Closing The Interview

Smile, shake their hand, and thank the candidate for their time. Someone from the interview panel should escort them out to the receptionist desk or from the building. Be careful not to make offers to anyone at the time of the interview. Wait until all candidates have been interviewed.

If you are interested in the person you can tell them that you will be making a final decision soon and if they are selected they will be contacted within X number of days. Give yourself enough time to finish interviewing and make a decision. You will also need to allow enough time for the selected candidate to make a decision.
Take time between interviews to make notes. It is best to do it immediately after the interview while the thoughts are fresh in your mind.

Follow-ups

Rank your selections and keep your score sheets with notes as backup for your Human Resource department to review. Ask them for company procedures for making a job offer. According to the company procedures contact your first choice and give them a couple of days to make their decision. During this time do not contact anyone else to tell him or her that the position has been filled because your first choice could very well decline.

In Closing

Interviewing can be stressful to both the candidate and the interviewer. Work to reduce the stress for both parties by (in advance of the interview process):

- Knowing the company rules for interviewing
- Researching information on your company so that you can answer questions
- Knowing in advance what you want to share about your project
- Determining what type of position you need now and two years from now
- Having your questions developed and eliminating unlawful questions
- Preparing tests in advance and having them reviewed by like positions

(continued on page 15)

Web-Based Learning
On-Line Structured User Acceptance Training

We know there are times when you and your team would like to receive training, but for time, budget and travel restrictions, you just can't receive the training in person. For that reason, we developed this online version of the course.
We took care to try to deliver a learning experience as close as possible without being there in person. Here's what you will experience:

- **A complete set of course notes in Adobe format**, which includes pictures of all slides, checklists, examples and templates. These are the same materials that students get in our physical courses.
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- **Streaming slide show presentations** of each module in RealPlayer format using RealPresenter, which allows you to advance or review the presentation to see specific slides. This slide show is narrated by Randy Rice, just like he would in a physical class, except without all of his bad jokes.
- **Exercises** in each module, with solutions to compare with. There are links that allow students to try their test cases on an application.
- **Templates and examples** in electronic format.
- **Streaming video tour** of a test lab and how to organize a user acceptance test.
- **Streaming video demonstration** of screen video of tests being performed.
- **Access to the instructor** via e-mail, chat, and message board.
- **Access to other students** to share experiences via chat room and message board.
- **Certificate of completion** upon completion of the course. We estimate it will take about 18 - 20 hours to complete the course.

Pricing for the Structured User Acceptance Testing Course Online Version

1 Student —**$747** ea.
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10 Students —**$5,999**
20 Students —**$10,399**
50 Students —**$21,049**
100 Students —**$39,999**

These prices are for a 90 day viewing period.

Course Outline

Module 1 (STBA) - Surviving the Top Ten Challenges of Software Testing
Module 2 (STBB) - Terminology
Module 3 (UATA) - Intro to User Acceptance Testing
Module 4 (UATB) - User Acceptance Test Planning
Module 5 (UATC) - User Acceptance Test Execution
Module 6 (STBH) - Regression Testing 1.
Module 7 (STBI) - Test Evaluation and Reporting
Module 8 (UATD) - Risk Assessment
Module 9 (UATE) - Designing Process-driven Tests
Module 10 (UATF) - Designing Test Cases from Use Cases
Module 11 (TTLH) - People Issues in User Acceptance Testing

For more information contact Carl Chandler
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email: carlchandler@riceconsulting.com

Interviewing Techniques, continued from page 14

- Asking the candidate in advance, being very specific, for samples of their work
- Determining what type of interview you will conduct and who will participate in the interview.
- Determining the location of the interview.
- Knowing what you are going to wear to set the tone of the interview and to project an image for your company.
- Watching for attitude, body language, and listening intently to the candidate's response to the questions.
- Taking good notes during and after the interview – keeping them short.
- Being courteous and keeping good eye contact.
- Not making an offering during the interview – not even eluding to it.
- Ranking your candidates.
- Giving yourself enough time to make a selection before making offers.
- Working with your Human Resource department to be sure you are doing everything within company policy and within the law.

Consulting and Course Offerings by Rice Consulting Services, Inc.

Rice Consulting Services' Consulting Offerings:

Testing Assessments

Rice Consulting Services' testing assessment is a quick and effective way for an organization to determine where they are in terms of software testing maturity. The assessment looks at three areas that are critical to testing:

Test organization - Who performs testing, what levels of experience are present, and when testing is performed in the development/maintenance life cycle.

Test process maturity - How well-defined, well-deployed, and repeatable the test process is, and whether it incorporates good testing management, practices, tools, and techniques.

Readiness - An assessment of the organization's readiness to improve the testing process. This involves an assessment of the staff's testing awareness, testing skills, and motivation to change current practices.

The deliverable is a report detailing the assessment's findings, a recommended quality improvement strategy, and a plan for addressing the improvement needs identified. If the assessment uncovers the need for in-house skills training and consulting, we will include proposed training and consulting plans in the report. The report is typically about 15 pages in length.

In-House Software Testing Certification Programs

There is a lot of interest in certification programs for software development and software quality. There is also value to both the individuals being certified as well as the organizations that employ them. As you examine the various certification programs that are available, you need to ask:

- How recognized is the certification?
- What is the basis of the certification (i.e., what does it cover?)?
- How is the certifying organization accountable and responsive to its members?
- How closely do the certification criteria reflect the items important to your career and organization?
- What is the required investment to get and maintain the certification?
- What is the future for the certification program?
- What is the initial cost to your company to get certified?
- What is the annual cost to your company to retain certification?

After examining the above questions, some organizations have determined that the best certification program may be their own. One of the greatest advantages of an in-house certification program is that you can control the criteria, future and investment of the certification. As for objectivity, there are options that allow you to administer the in-house program while an independent organization verifies certification criteria.

Rice Consulting Services, Inc. has been working with several organizations recently to develop this kind of program. **We have extended certification training programs of 10, 15 and 20 days in length. These programs are tailored to your people, business, technologies and tools.** Participants range from experienced testers and QA personnel to people just entering the field.

This type of program makes the training effort more than a "one shot" event. People are tested at the end of each major topic area and are also evaluated by direct observation during exercises. The certification is normally determined by a combination of demonstrated proficiency during training as well as actual work experience. The certification criteria are defined by you, but we can help you with templates and examples.

Each in-house certification program is different. For details about how we can help you design and conduct an in-house certification program that is right for you and your organization, just call Carl Chandler at 405-226-7653 or email us at carlchandler@riceconsulting.com.

Rice Consulting Services' Course Offerings:

For those who hold professional certifications each hour of instruction should qualify for one CPE credit. We recommend that you check with the certifying organization to verify CPE credit applicability.

Visit our web site at:

http://www.riceconsulting.com/course_listings.htm

Building an Effective QA and Testing Process for Ongoing Validation 2 days — This course is designed to teach participants how to design and implement processes for quality assurance and quality control.
Web-based Testing Overview 1 day — A practical computer-based interactive seminar designed to provide a quick start in testing web-based applications.
E-Commerce and Security Testing 1 day — A practical hands-on seminar to explore the deeper issues of testing e-commerce applications.
Testing Web Technology 1 day — A practical hands-on seminar to explore the deeper issues of testing web-based applications.

Consulting and Course Offerings by Rice Consulting Services, Inc., cont.

Build Your Own Course

– 2 – 20 days http://www.riceconsulting.com/build_your_own_course.htm

Because all of our courses are designed to be modular, we can easily customize a course for you for presentation at your facility! A typical course day is 6 to 7 hours of instruction.

We provide a listing of all of our course modules at http://www.riceconsulting.com/build_your_own_course.htm. Simply select the modules you would like to have presented to your team. We provide a brief description of each module but if you would like to see more details, just click on the Module ID link. Upon submitting your course design, we will get a copy of your selections and will contact you by e-mail and phone.

If you would like to learn more about the information covered in any of our articles we at Rice Consulting Services, Inc. offer an excellent course that will enhance your company's software quality process.

Security Testing for the Enterprise and the Web

3 days - http://www.riceconsulting.com/security_testing.htm

This is a practical computer-based interactive seminar designed to provide a foundation for security testing. You will learn the terminology, the unique issues, and the process for testing security in web and enterprise applications. As a result of attending this seminar, you should be able to understand security issues and have an increased comfort level in testing the security of web-based and enterprise applications.

Security Testing for the Enterprise and the Web will help you become more comfortable and confident in dealing with security testing issues. You will emerge from this three-day session knowing how to develop a security testing strategy and security test plan. You will learn the details of how attackers break into system and how to design tests to validate that security is adequate to prevent such attacks. You will also have an understanding of how hackers and crackers think.
The information that your company obtains and stores is perhaps its most valuable corporate asset. Learn how to protect it and make sure protection measures are working in this course.

Who Will Benefit

- QA Managers
- Test managers
- Test analysts
- Testers
- End users
- Web developers
- General managers who are responsible for making IT security decisions in their organizations
- IT auditors and internal auditors

The program requires basic IT and testing knowledge or experience

Other courses offered by Rice Consulting Services, Inc.:

Integration and Interoperability Testing 3 days — This is an intermediate level course to build skills in testing systems and applications in diverse integrated environments, especially where compliance to interoperability standards must be valid.
Gathering, Documenting and Testing User Requirements 2 days — This is a basic course in understanding the process of gathering, defining, testing and managing user requirements. You will learn the requirements process from start to ongoing maintenance.
Managing and Controlling Testware 2 days—Presents processes and tools to manage test plans, test cases, test scripts, and other items needed to perform tests through the project lifecycle.
Basic Training in Software Testing 2 days — A quick start course in software testing for people just getting into the field, or for people who just need a refresher course or validation for their current testing techniques.
Becoming an Effective Test Team Leader 2 days — This session teaches you how to be the very best test manager and leader.
Introduction to QA and Testing 2 days — A quick start course in software quality, quality assurance and testing.
Structured User Acceptance Testing 3 days — This is one of the few courses available that teaches a non-technical and easily learned process for testing computer systems from a business process perspective.
Unit Testing 2 days — This course teaches how to test at the unit or component level.
Walkthroughs, Reviews and Inspections 1 day — Teaches practical processes for verification of project deliverables.

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The Software Quality Advisor Online

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"Test everything. Hold onto the good."
I Thessalonians 5:21

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April 2002 Issue:

- **Am I Getting Through to You? - A Brief Guide to Penetration Testing**
  by Randy Rice, CQA, CSTE
- **Mission Focus Promotes Team Work**
  by Carl Chandler
- **Interviewing Techniques—Part II—The Candidate Perspective**
  by Suzanne Chandler

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Janet's Experience and Credentials

- Over 12 years experience as a business owner
- 11 years experience as financial director
- 2 years as Chief Executive Officer of Rice Consulting Services, Inc.

Randy's Experience and Credentials

- Over 25 years experience in the development and testing of information systems in a variety of environments, including web-based, traditional, client/server, and Object-oriented approaches,
- Certified Software Test Engineer (CSTE)
- Certified Quality Analyst (CQA),
- Fellow of the Life Management Institute (FLMI),
- Chairperson of the Quality Assurance Institute's (QAI) annual International Software Testing Conference, 1995-2000
- Co-author with William E. Perry of the book, *Surviving the Top Ten Challenges of Software Testing.*

Randy has been published on the topic of software testing in:

- The *Journal of the Quality Assurance Institute,*
- *Client/Server Computing,*
- *Powersoft Applications Developer,*
- *Enterprise Systems Journal,*
- Crosstalk

He is also publisher of the *Software Quality Advisor*, the "how-to" newsletter of Software Quality Assurance.

Carl's Experience and Credentials

- Over 18 years experience in quality assurance and product improvement
- 20 years experience trouble-shooting mission-critical systems in a variety of environments
- Over 8 years experience as an instructor of quality assurance, trouble-shooting, and the theory of electronics
- 6 years experience in sales and marketing

Carl has been received numerous awards and decorations through the United States Air Force to include the John Levitow Award for Outstanding Leadership Abilities and Top of Class for Air Force Leadership School

Suzanne's Experience and Credentials

- Over 17 years experience in software development and the IT field
- 4 years experience as a Project Manager in and out of the IT field
- 2 years experience as Project Coordinator over Project Managers
- 2 years experience as Director of Operations

Left to right: Top row—Randy Rice, Vice President Research and Development, Instructor—Carl Chandler, Director of Sales and Marketing, Instructor.
Bottom row—Janet Rice, Owner—Suzanne Chandler , Director of Operations

How Are We Doing? Part 2, An Internal Performance Survey

	Score 1 = poor, 5 = wow!	Comments
Responsiveness		
Was the project delivered when promised?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did the project deliver what was requested?	1 2 3 4 5	
Teamwork		
Did the project team exhibit a spirit of cooperation?	1 2 3 4 5	
Communication		
Were the lines of communication understood by the project team?	1 2 3 4 5	
Were people accessible to speak with during the project?	1 2 3 4 5	
Was there a common set of terminology used?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did communication occur both to and from people?	1 2 3 4 5	
Problem Solving		
How well was the problem initially defined?	1 2 3 4 5	
Learning		
Were key items measured on the project, such as time and defects?		

How Are We Doing? Part 2, An Internal Performance Survey, cont.

	Score 1 = poor, 5 = wow!	Comments
Was there a set-aside time for people to reflect and review how the project was performed?	1 2 3 4 5	
Practices		
Did the project follow a method consistent with other projects performed in this organization?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did the project team show an awareness of the value of consistency with other projects?	1 2 3 4 5	
Competency		
Did management demonstrate competency in running the project?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did the project team demonstrate competency in performing the project?	1 2 3 4 5	
Leadership		
Did the leadership on the project clearly communicate their vision of what was to be accomplished?		
Did project leadership exhibit the ability to influence people?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did project leadership show a commitment to achieving project goals?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did project leadership show a commitment to delivering a quality project?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did project leadership show a commitment to meeting customers' needs?	1 2 3 4 5	

Did anyone in particular on the project exhibit an attitude that made a positive difference in the outcome of the project? If so, who?

Did anyone in particular in the customer area exhibit an attitude that made a positive difference in the outcome of the project? If so, who?

What one thing would you suggest doing differently on the next project?

How Are We Doing? Part 2, Customer Survey

	Score 1 = poor, 5 = wow!	Comments
Responsiveness		
Was the project delivered when promised?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did the project deliver what was requested?	1 2 3 4 5	
Teamwork		
Did the project team exhibit a spirit of cooperation?	1 2 3 4 5	
Communication		
Were people accessible to speak with during the project?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did communication occur both to and from people?	1 2 3 4 5	
Problem Solving		
How well was the problem initially defined?	1 2 3 4 5	
Learning		
Was there a set-aside time for people to reflect and review how the project was performed?	1 2 3 4 5	
Practices		
Did the project follow a method consistent with other projects performed in this organization?	1 2 3 4 5	

How Are We Doing? Part 2, Customer Survey, cont.

	Score 1 = poor, 5 = wow!	Comments
Competency		
Did management demonstrate competency in running the project?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did the project team demonstrate competency in performing the project?	1 2 3 4 5	
Leadership		
Did the leadership on the project clearly communicate their vision of what was to be accomplished?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did project leadership exhibit the ability to influence people?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did project leadership show a commitment to achieving project goals?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did project leadership show a commitment to delivering a quality project?	1 2 3 4 5	
Did project leadership show a commitment to meeting customers' needs?		

Did anyone in particular on the project exhibit an attitude that made a positive difference in the outcome of the project? If so, who?

Did anyone in particular in the customer area exhibit an attitude that made a positive difference in the outcome of the project? If so, who?

What one thing would you suggest doing differently on the next project?