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How You Can Manage Growth When All The Great Testers Are Taken

Four Things You Can Do To Select The Best Outsourced Team

According to the April 21st issue of the Austin American-Statesman, Central Texas has the strongest job growth in the state. Everyone's business is growing. That's great.

Except for one thing. What do you do when all the good people are taken?

When you combine a growing business with a rapidly falling unemployment rate, you run the risk of having to hire whomever you can get just to keep up. To compound the problem, when you do this with your testing team, your carefully crafted software can become buggy, costing you valuable customers. One of the keys to growth is hiring the right people, for the right job, the right way. One way to do that is to use an offshore team.

This is a set of guidelines that we developed for selecting offshore teams where software testing and communication skills are critical. If an offshore team can't perform as well as local testers then you can expect delays and lots of extra work. We learned that the hard way. If you do it right, you will grow your company, your customer satisfaction, and your teams together.

What follows is a list of a few simple things you can do to make selecting your offshore team easier and more effective for everyone.

A quick note before you read further. This isn't intended to be anything more than how we do it and what works well for us. It's not a scientific white paper or big research study – I'll leave that to the guys with more money. It's me sharing my ideas with you with the hope that you'll find something in here that makes your life a little easier.

Why am I doing this? Two reasons come to mind:

1. Nobody benefits when people hire poorly performing offshore teams. Customers get buggy software, software releases are delayed, and Test Teams are exhausted and good quality Test Engineers get harder and



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harder to find. If I can make it a little easier for you then somewhere down the road, we'll all benefit.

2. Maybe we can help you. You might find that this just isn't something you want to do. We use this process everyday and the quality of life of my teams and customers, not to mention the revenue of quite a few software companies, depend on it. If you don't want the hassle of doing this yourself, then please let me know and we'll see if there's something we can do to help you. <http://www.testco.com/ContactUs.html>

Enough said. Let's get to the details.

1 – Start With a Well Defined Selection System

We've found that a well defined selection system can result in a 4X improvement in effectiveness and 10X improvement in efficiency. Additionally, a system that performs well continues to improve when the people involved in it learn to trust the results that it produces.

Our selection system consists of

- Determination of the proper candidate criteria
- Identification of a target group of candidates
- Prospecting that results in appropriate candidates responding (and inappropriate candidates NOT responding)
- Initial qualification
- Review and agreement on contracts, roles and responsibilities
- Detail evaluation
- Offer and acceptance.

2 – Don't Let QA Take A Backseat

Are you looking for a QA team or a development team?

Too often, we have heard from our customers that large offshore companies will come in, push hard for development, and then throw in the QA as an afterthought. The onsite testing team sits in the backseat to the more profitable (for the vendor) venture. Testing begins to suffer, and you're back where you started.



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We've found that it's important to focus on the problem at hand, and hire a team that solves our needs. In our interviews, we look for offshore partners that have the expertise in the area in which we're looking. In short, we hire software testers to test software and developers to develop.

The benefit to this approach is that you can maintain the quality of your testing, while protecting the integrity of your current team. It also keeps your potential vendor honest.

3 – Understand The Traits Of A Top Quality Test Team

What are the traits of a top QA tester?

Our work has taught us that there are three (3) things to zero in on.

The kind of **systems** that our partners have in place must develop the long-term careers of their employees. We don't look for another butt in a chair, but for a process for hiring good people

Under the best of circumstances, **communication** is everything in business. When working with an outsourced or offshore partner, language and dialogue are that much more important

Finally, we look for **core values**. The team that we work with should have the same desire for quality work within them that we find in ourselves. We can't create what isn't there.

You may find that that there are different qualities that you look for in a partner. These few serve us well, but if you see others, I'd enjoy discussing them with you.

4 – Put Them To The Test – And Have Them Fail!

Now that you've found a couple suitable vendors, what do you do? How do you choose the right group of people to handle your testing?

After narrowing down the field, we put them through a competitive pilot. Our potential partners must go through the same rigorous test cases that our current



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customers create for us. If the outside team can't handle the criteria, we let them go.

A key element of this pilot is to create several "failure" situations. We find it very valuable to understand how our partners will react when a failure occurs. Software testing is a people-based consulting-type activity. Anytime you have that recipe, you're sure to have some failures. Knowing how your offshore partner is going to react to that failure can mean the difference between recovering within a day or not recovering at all.

What's Next?

I hope you've found this guide valuable. I developed it the hard way – by figuring it out step-by-step and making more than our fair share of mistakes along the way. It does work! We currently have 6 offshore partners and over a dozen customers who rate us over 95% in our quarterly customer satisfaction survey.

Here's what one of my customers said recently –

"TESTCo has helped us enable a real-time, iterative development process that has had a dramatic impact on our time-to-market. The introduction of real-time QA decreased release cycle times by 20% and increased the defect discovery rate by 400%. By offering a flexible usage model for testing services and a reduced per-head cost, BetweenMarkets was able to reduce its QA related expenses by 50%."

These tips may be all you need to get going. If that's the case, then I'm pleased to have been of service. All I ask is that you drop me an email at <http://www.testco.com/ContactUs.html> after you use them to let me know how they worked for you. I'm especially interested to know what didn't work for you so I can improve the process for myself and the many other people who will use it.

You may find that you like the idea but are still uncertain as to how to proceed. That's not unexpected. Unfortunately, I can't give every detail of every step in the process – it's just too much information. If you find that you're still a bit uncertain, feel free to contact me at <http://www.testco.com/ContactUs.html> to



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schedule a meeting to answer your questions and discuss the process in more detail.

If you decide that you'd rather not mess with all this but still want the best and easiest software testing process then we might be able to help you. In fact, the best way to avoid having to work through this process entirely is to use my firm, TESTCo, instead. If this idea appeals to you and you'd like to discuss how we work with our customers and the value they receive from our work, please contact me at <http://www.testco.com/ContactUs.html> to schedule a time to talk in more detail.

No matter how you use this report, I wish you the best of luck and success with your software testing project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Hotz".

Jeff Hotz, President/Founder, TESTCo.

About TESTCo

TESTCo customers eliminate software testing problems, slash support costs by up to 50% and achieve their release date commitments...all without the risk of hunting down the best offshore vendor, the pain and frustration of learning how to manage them and the unpredictable results so common with most offshore vendors.