

Hiring Testers/Testing Interview Special Edition

Testing Circus

Volume 5 - Edition 7 - July 2014

**Your Monthly Magazine
on
Software Testing**



Interview with
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HUIB SCHOOTS

Organization: Improve Quality Services

Current Role/Designation: Senior Consultant

Location: Den Bosch, the Netherlands

Interview with Testers

Huib is a curious and passionate person. He likes to share his passion for testing by coaching, training and giving presentations on a variety of test subjects. With eighteen years of experience in IT and software testing, Huib has considerable experience in the field of software testing, both nationally and internationally. He likes to combine agile, context-driven testing and human aspects to improve testing and help people to grow. To achieve that, his goal is to make testing better and more fun. He loves reading and attempts to read everything ever published on software testing. Huib is member of TestNet, AST and ISST, black-belt in the Miagi-Do School of software testing and co-author of a book about the future of software testing. He is working as a senior consultant, trainer and coach for Improve Quality Services, a provider of consultancy and training in the field of testing. Huib lives in the centre of the Burgundian Den Bosch. With many shops, restaurants and pubs as well as nature reserve "Bossche Broek" within walking distance it is a wonderful place to live. When he's not testing he enjoys playing trombone in a brass band, photography, golf, games (especially strategic board games), travelling, diving, beer brewing and reading.



* Interviewed by **Jay Philips**

1. Tell us about your journey to becoming a software tester. How did it start and how this has been so far? Was it planned or by accident?

After I finished my study Business Informatics I joined a big consultancy company. I did a masterclass to become a developer. I loved doing IT projects and solving problems, but I didn't really enjoy programming in FoxPro. To me it felt like staring at a screen all day. The communication and collaboration with other people gave me more energy. After every release we installed during the weekend, we spend a week fixing the bugs that popped up. On another project I distributed the software on floppy discs and every serious bug forced us to distribute a new release. I got sick and tired of copying floppies very soon. So I started to look for ways to improve the quality of the software we were building. Doing this I ran into testing. As developers we did testing. But as I look back on what we really did, I would rather call that "trying" now.

My first steps in the testing world I took as a test automation engineer. Later I also did manual testing. Here I found my passion: finding things out, learning about how people work, helping teams to make better software. And back in the nineties, testing wasn't a real job within IT in many projects. So I was happy being part of developing the testing profession within the Telecom Industry I was mainly working in back then.

2. When did you realize your passion was software testing?

Within the company I worked in 2002 it was normal that people grew into (project) management. I tried that too. Although I really like to organize and make projects work, I missed testing. I was always paying too much attention to the testing in my projects. I realized testing was my passion and I went back to testing and test management. Several years later I joined a test consultancy company and became unit manager. Because this wasn't a full time job, I also

did training and consulting. Here I really found my passion: training people, helping companies to become better in testing and coaching the people in my unit. In this period I started reading blogs, discovered the book "Lessons Learned in Software Testing" and context-driven testing which gave a new and exciting boost to my testing passion. In 2011 I finally did Rapid Software Testing. That gave me another boost in learning new things I hadn't considered before. Last year I did a project for a hospital where I was test manager, tester and coach. A perfect combination of everything I love in my craft.

3. Do you regret being associated with software testing today? Given a chance would you move from testing to any other field in IT?

No, not at all. See my previous answer. I moved away from project management and went back to testing. I love what I do and even if I win the lottery I will still be in the testing industry, probably doing a lot more training for free. I think testing is one of the most interesting jobs within IT since it touches on so many interesting topics. And it is still a very young industry where we can make a real difference.

4. You have written a book in Dutch "Bepaal je koers! Toekomst en Trends in Testen". What is that book about? Do you plan to translate that book into English?

In English the title would be "Define your course! Future and trends in software testing" and it is written on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of TestNet. The jubilee book was a present to the 1600 TestNet members. The book provides an overview of trends and developments that me and seven other contributors to the book saw arise around us. We tried to translate them to the testing profession. We think software testing will always be required, but our craft will change. Using personas we described what changes and opportunities will arise for testers. The book makes clear why the demand for certain

roles will disappear and how testers can respond to the changes that will occur. Our goal was not to predict the future, because nobody can. It was meant as a wake-up call to testers: "The world around you is changing. What are you going to do?". Unfortunately I think it will never be translated into English. The book is written for TestNet members and they all speak Dutch. Translating the book is simply too much work and/or too expensive.

5. You mentioned you attended Rapid Software Testing course. How did that help you in your career?

Rapid Software Testing changed my testing paradigm completely! Back in 2005 I bought the book "Lessons learned in Software Testing" and since then I have been reading stuff from Cem Kaner, James Bach, Michael Bolton and others. One of my favorite lessons from the book is Lesson 272: "If you can get a black belt in only two weeks, avoid fights". After RST the whole puzzle in my head fell into place. There was so much more to testing than I had learned for the traditional classes. A whole new world opened for me: heuristics, critical thinking, social sciences, problem solving and exploratory testing to name a few.

6. You do free skype coaching for testers. Does that help you as a tester? Why don't you charge for your coaching?

Yes, it does! I believe in continuous and deliberate learning and I try to put that into practice. People learn from feedback and evaluations. Coaching can boost your learning. I learned about coaching testers via Anne-Marie Charrett. She was very helpful telling me a lot about it via Skype. Later I attended a workshop she did at Let's Test. After that I started doing skype coaching with James Bach and later I did some sessions with Ilari Henrik Aegerter. I experienced that this really helped me learn new things and become better in topics we worked on during the sessions like exploratory testing,

reporting and observing. After some sessions I decided I wanted to learn how to do it myself.

When I met Erwin van der Koogh we discussed [working for free](#). He told me that helping other people is one of the best things you can do for your own happiness. And I like helping other people. Skype coaching gives me an opportunity to help others and make the world a little better. It also helps me become a better tester and teacher.

7. In 2011 you were one of the founders of DEWT. What made you want to create this group? And what does DEWT do?

James Bach challenged German and Dutch testers in his blogpost "[My Stockholm Syndrome](#)". As a reaction to that some Dutch testers started discussing a peer workshop with codename "NLET" at a TestNet Event. We wanted more than only listen to talks at conferences. We wanted to discuss context-driven testing stuff with like-minded people to learn more about CDT. The discussion continued on twitter and in November 2010, seven passionate software testers meet at my kitchen table to start a Dutch version of peer workshops on (exploratory) testing. After an exciting evening of discussion we formulated our main goal: "get together with like-minded, explore our profession, get inspired, have geeky conversations about our craft software testing and learn". Early 2011 we created a [website](#) and started blogging. In June 2011 the first [DEWT peer workshop](#) was organized. We have experimented with several formats and learned a lot about how to do peer conferences. Currently we are planning DEWT5 with "Test Strategy" as our theme. We are moving more towards a LAWST style peer workshop where we try to dive really deep into the topic discussed over two days. Besides a yearly peer workshop we try to get together 3 or 4 times a year in an evening session. We have discussed topics like coaching, selling context-driven testing, context-

driven presentation heuristics or testing exercises. Next month we get together to do a workshop "chain testing" that Joep Schuurkes, one of the DEWTs, teaches. We will do a simulation for a couple of hours. Sounds like fun and I am really looking forward to it.

8. You recently changed jobs and now you work for Improve Quality Services? It is founded by one of the writers of TMap, right? Are you moving away from context-driven testing?

Not at all. Since February I work for Improve Quality Services. Erik van Veenendaal, one of the writers of TMap, founded the company in 1998. He left the company a couple of years ago and I actually never worked with him. ImproveQS realizes that the world is changing and the testing craft is changing too. I work for ImproveQS because it is a company that specializes in testing and quality management. At this company I can do what I love: be a trainer, consultant and coach for context-driven testing and agile. This year we focus on telling the Dutch testing community ImproveQS has added context-driven testing to their portfolio. Next year the focus will be on working with James Bach and Michael Bolton on Rapid Software Testing.

9. According to you, what is lacking in today's commercialized training industry, especially in testing?

There is a lot wrong with the way people think about learning. Many companies send their people to a class and expect their people to come back and start doing the stuff they have learned in class. I think it doesn't work that way. I believe that people only really learn how to do test techniques for instance by applying them in practice and getting serious feedback from more senior people who mastered the test techniques. The most courses I have seen are long lectures with over simplified exercises on paper. There is no actual software tested in those classes. I

enjoy watching videos on education and learning. If you want to learn more on how people learn and what is wrong with the training industry, watch “Ken Robinson: How to escape education's death valley” or “[Sugata Mitra: Build a School in the Cloud](#)”.

10. Last year you organized a conference called Tasting Let's Test in the Netherlands. Was that the first year of the conference? Why should people come to that conference?

I attended several Let's Test Conferences in Sweden as a speaker. It is a fabulous conference, the best I have ever been to. It is special since everybody stays in the same venue and people keep running into each other. The atmosphere is great and you get to learn loads. That is why I was honoured when Henrik and Johan asked me to join forces and bring Let's Test to the Netherlands in 2014.

Tasting Let's Test is a unique context-driven conference, for testers, by testers. Our main goal is to make a valuable experience for all participants, not to maximize profit. It is there for you if you're interested not only in listening to great talks, but also want to actually test. We had a talk on exploratory testing by Carsten Feilberg, followed by a practical exploratory testing session with all participants in the test lab. We also created the opportunity to pick the brains of the speakers and testing peers. Tasting Let's Test is an excellent opportunity to get a bite-sized taste of the full Let's Test experience. And it is a really affordable event.

11. You also blogged about popular books and blogs for testers. Do you read a lot? What would you recommend other testers to read?

Yes, I love reading! I keep buying books that people recommend to me. Unfortunately I have a huge backlog of books to read. But having them in my library gives me the opportunity to read them when

I need the information and knowledge. I also read many blogs, mostly when they advertise a new post via Twitter. Last year TestNet organized a one-day conference with context-driven testing as the theme. I wanted to help the Dutch community evolve to learn, think and do more skilled testing. That is why I asked many tester friends from the context-driven community to send me their most popular blogs and books. I wrote two blog post with the results of those little surveys. One tester replied that he could not send a list. “What you should be reading depends on what you are ready to learn about next, and that varies from person to person”. And I fully agree with this statement. Use the lists of popular books and blogs as a source for inspiration.

Some tips: Read “Lessons Learned in Software Testing” by Kaner, Bach and Pettichord if you want to learn more about context-driven testing. Read “Perfect Software and other Illusions about Software Testing” by Jerry Weinberg if you want to learn about myths in our craft. Give it to people you work with if you think they need to learn about testing and you suffer from common misunderstandings. Read “Thinking fast and slow” by Daniel Kahneman or “You're not so smart” by David McRaney or “Predictably Irrational” by Dan Ariely if you want to learn more about how we think and our biases. In this category I also highly recommend the “Think 101, The Science of Everyday Thinking” online course or the videos on Youtube.

12. What qualities will you look for in a candidate when you want to recruit someone for software testing job?

Have a look at the article I wrote on “Hiring professional testers” somewhere else in this magazine.

13. What will you suggest to people who want to join IT industry as software testers?

Software testing is not an easy job. If you are curious, passionate about learning and like to find out how stuff works, testing might be the right job for you. Young testers should realize that testing is not about process and artifacts only as some in our industry try to make them believe. There are many skills you need to train to become a great tester. Asking questions is one of the most important for testers and especially junior testers. In the current market I see a high demand for software testers with solid technical skills. Make sure you learn how software is created and how it works, collaborate with developers and don't be afraid to learn about scripting, coding and how to use tools.

14. What is your next big idea?

Only one? I have many ideas. I am not sure if others would call them big, but they are a big deal to me. Recently I discussed an idea for a "peer workshop" in France with several people. We hire a huge villa in a nice region in the summer and get together with 20 testers to spend a long weekend or a week together without any official program. During the week participants can work together, discuss new ideas and meet other testers in a relaxing environment. My idea is that many regular conference speakers like the interaction with each other and the best ideas emerge from conversations with each other. But when the conference is over everybody leaves and there is no time to work on the ideas. Maybe to cover for the costs we could test some company's software for a day per person. I guess there must be companies who are willing to pay to have their software tested by a group of excellent testers.

15. Name few people you would like to thank, people who helped you directly or indirectly in your career as a software testing professional.

There are many people who I need to thank and I am afraid I will forget several people. In my early career Jeroen Smoorenburg, Kimo Wesseling, Onno Verdonk and Ed van Rijckevorsel were very helpful and influential. They had the patience and the perseverance to work with me and coach me. I learned a lot from them. I also learned a lot from people like Ruud Teunissen, Martin Pol and Frits Bezemer in my time at Polteq. At Rabobank Jean-Paul Varwijk, Rien Krol and everybody involved in the lateral meetings helped me to become a better tester. Currently everybody involved in DEWT is very influential. Of course I need to thank Michael Bolton and James Bach for teaching me an awful lot over the last years. Indirectly I want to thank many people in the context-driven community for sharing their wisdom and ideas with me. Currently I am working with some great testers at Improve Quality Services. I especially want to name Ruud Cox since we have been working closely together for the last 5 months.

16. One last question – Do you read Testing Circus Magazine? If yes, what is your feedback to improve this magazine?

Yes, I do. But I have to confess that I do not have time to read all the articles every month. The stuff I read is good and I like it. It is hard to keep all your readers happy with all content. I think the crowd is simply too diverse to do that. If I have to mention something: I would like to see more in depth articles and experience reports with examples of how people do their actual work. Anyway, keep up the good work and don't worry if some people do not like all your content.

Blog - <http://www.huibschoots.nl/blog/>

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