



## Quardev Monthly

Volume 3, Issue 10

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### Welcome!

Welcome to the Quardev Monthly!

We look forward to sharing insights and helpful information in the areas where we know a thing or two - testing, quality assurance, technical writing and documentation, project management, and consulting.

This month we look at team building—this article outlines a real scenario where Quardev needed to build a team quickly

for a client.

Jon Bach details a five day plan that we implemented with a recent group of employees for a new project with a client. Feel free to take the whole outline or just the pieces that fit best for you.

Enjoy the newsletter with our compliments and please contact us with questions, comments, or article ideas.

-The Quardev Crew!!

### Five Days to Build a Team

*By Jon Bach, Manager for Corporate Intellect, Quardev, Inc.*

**Disclaimer:** This is for test leads and managers only. If you're not a manager or lead stop reading. You're not allowed to see the secrets of the inner sanctum here. Move along. These are dangerous ideas you won't be ready for.

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Ok. They're gone. Now it's just us manager types. Let me start by saying if you've inherited a test team or are starting one from scratch, I have some ideas that might help you get off on the right foot. If you aren't doing these, that's ok, of course, but know that they might be leaders themselves one day and might try some of these.

These may not work for you. They come from me being the manager I want to be. I want someone who is approachable, friendly, technical, at-

tentive, and capable of learning and inspiration from me while being inspiration themselves.

I have had success with these techniques, but I define success as having teams that seem to have fun while also being able to weather challenges.

Supplies: you will need:

- a projector
- a conference room
- a teleconferencing line if you have remote employees
- a laptop
- a deck of cards
- several dice
- internet access
- index cards
- an hourglass or stopwatch

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## Five Days to Build a Team, Continued

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### Day 1: Introductions and expectations

Bring everybody into a conference room (or on a speaker phone) and allow them two minutes to say something about themselves. Name, title, role, and specialty. What do they want to be the “go to” person for. How can I help you and how can you help me, with a specific skill set.

After that, meet with them one-on-one for 45 minutes each

**Ask:** Where do they live, what’s their commute like, how many kids do they have (and what are their names), what do they want to do next, what was their first job, what is one of their frustrations on the job (or in past jobs), what is their favorite test tool, what bug are they most proud of, what are they doing when they are not testing, what is their favorite book? What do you want to learn? On a scale of 1-10, what technology or tool are you most confident with? What’s the most useful tool you used?

Bring them all back at the end of the day: Show them testing – your way. It could be test design or test execution. It could be a testing site, a testing example, a newsgroup thread or a Web site you like showing a paper you’ve written. They need to see you and they’ll be forming their expectations based on what they know about you.

Show them your favorite tools and articles and web sites.

Encourage creative insubordination. If they ignore an order or a directive, they better come up with something equivalent that gets to the heart of why you asked them to do it. I was told once that if your manager asks you to do something you don’t want to do, ignore it. If they really want it done, they will ask again. I was also told that the answer to any question is yes, but the follow-up from you should be “...and this is what it will cost.”

**Homework assignment for them:** Assign each of them the task of creating 5 questions they feel a new person should know about the product they will be testing.

**Homework assignment for you:** Come up with 10 questions you think they each need to be able to answer about the thing they’ll be testing.

### Day 2: Review and reinforcement -- Group brainstorming and exercise day – Play Day

It’s not “re-enforcement” because you can’t enforce anything on people who’s will and mind aren’t there to comply. You’re there to *allow* a culture to exist, not force one.

Announce the results of the survey to the group. Except for the personal, private info, reveal what everyone told you. One way to do this is game-show style, like Family Feud, where you have the answers of a survey. Use Google maps or put up a map in the room where everyone is from.

Try a group testing exercise where you keep the notes. Book a conference room with a projector and the application under test. Ask them to explore, you drive. List the test ideas or the features you see. You can use this later. This is product modeling and it’s a skill. It takes some practice. Allow people to be quiet and not participate if they don’t want to. Follow the thread of ideas.

Create an Open-Book exam for them to take based on the 10 questions you came up with. (If new people join the team later, you can give them the collection of questions.)

Try a tactile testing game like Art Show / the Dice Game / or Combo lock (email me about what these mean.)

Don’t forget to collect their 5-question assignments.

## Five Days to Build a Team, Continued

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**Homework assignment for them:** Come up with a 5-minute “lightning” talk. Each person will have to give a presentation – a demo of their favorite tool, favorite operating system shortcuts, test technique, website – something that shows off the kind of value they might be able to bring to the team.

**Homework assignment for you:** Compile their questions into an Open-Book exam you will take in front of them tomorrow.

### **Day 3: Explore the tools they all will be using on the job – protocols for filling in time cards or for filing bugs – walk them through it a few times**

Answer the questions they gave to you about things they should think a new person should know.

After that, have them take the 10 Open-Book questions you created for them (or any you did not answer) at their desks. Meet later in the day to debrief with everyone.

### **Day 4: Practice**

Run them through another group brainstorm exploratory testing session. Then later that day, have them do one themselves. Let them know that one of them will be scrutinized in front of the entire team. There's no way around this in the working world. Their work will be scrutinized and it's good practice. Pick someone who's willing to volunteer.

I learned that two of the team of 5 loved board games. That was enough for me to make a voluntary lunch meeting where people could play or just watch. One of the games turned out to be Scotland Yard, a 5 against 1 board game. I decided to be the one.

Put yourself in a vulnerable, but honest position. They don't expect you to know everything. You have surrounded yourself with smart people, so let them be smart. Give them the fun of showing it off.

### **Day 5: This is their day**

Questions, concerns, comments, objections, expectations. You are under fire here.

Review the concepts: Open-Book testing, exploration, learning, the survey results, what you want them to know about you and your expectations, where they're from (on Google Maps), their specialties and statements about areas they will be the “go to” guy, review the info from the lightning talks.

You will have built a culture of learning, and testing is learning. You will have guided (allowed) a culture to take place. No nicknames, no inside jokes... yet. They will emerge naturally. They may report to you, but you are of service to them and you always will be. You may be too busy to respond, but that will catch up with you as “trust credit” that you may get into debt from if you do not pay attention to it.