



## Quardev Monthly

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### Welcome!

Welcome to the August edition of 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.

In this month's edition Jon Bach

shares some thoughts about being a project journalist and how it can be a key role in keeping a project on track and organized.

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

-The Quardev Crew!!

### The Role of a Project Journalist

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

Some of you know my secret identity – I do not have a computer science degree. I have a degree in Journalism. It's been 20 years since graduation, but I still take notes compulsively, which has come in handy more than once on a project.

I think there may be usefulness to having journalistic skills. After all, journalists don't destroy the news, they report the news. (Or more awkwardly: "they don't BREAK the news, they just break the news.")

Here are some parallels between testing and journalism:

- Journalists find problems that concern people
- Journalists investigate
- Journalists question
- Journalists adapt to answers

from the questions they ask

- Journalists interview more than one source
- Journalists record
- Journalists research
- Journalists report

Let's take these one at a time:

1. Finding problems – A tester is alert for risks, concerns, issues, and problems in whatever software or electronic service being delivered that could affect the business.
2. Investigation – A tester follows a lead and uncovers context about problems

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## The Role of a Project Journalist, Continued

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3. Questioning – A tester is curious and uses different types of structures to learn new things (loaded, rhetorical, compound, open-ended, hypothetical, etc.)
4. Adaptation – A tester reacts to emerging context, changes course, drills down or backs off depending on signals they get from sources.
5. Interviewing Sources – A tester consults a variety of avenues likely to provide diverse information and a rich network that adds credibility to their report – they strive to either corroborate or refute their conjectures by gathering different perspectives.
6. Recording – A tester takes notes as they work; takes pictures, screenshots, captures log files, records mouse clicks, keystrokes, operating system states, and keeps an issues list of things that need escalation.
7. Research – A tester looks at old documentation, bug trends, competing products, history, performs root cause analysis, passing and failing tests.
8. Reporting – A tester files bugs, reports status, makes their notes readable if presenting them, responds to triage with more context, gives impressions, models, risk assessments and an outlook on where to go next or what trends may suggest.

As a journalist, you are a public steward of service to a community. You are relied upon to find out the truth and be unbiased. Your job is not to be manipulated or to manipulate, but to illuminate and elucidate – to inform and enquire.

You don't break software any more than a journalist creates bad news. It was broken when you got there and your report is a report of what you discovered, your findings – what you found.

A journalist can also imagine a potential problem and pose it as a question, provoking discussion. A tester does this too by saying "What if...?" and "Have you thought of <this condition>...? It is a vital service, not meant to be a bottleneck or a gate keeping role, but simply an informative one. They respond quickly, often carrying scanners to monitor emergency frequencies, alert and reactive to know the story and tell it to others.

Another word for a journalist is "reporter," and like testing, there are various types of reporting you can see just by flipping through a newspaper – entertainment, hard news, features, sports, editorial, financial, and local news. And just like there are "beat reporters" assigned to a particular genre, there are Subject Matter Experts or domain testers meant to specialize in their ability to discover different classes of bugs.

I've been advocating the role of a Project Documentarian lately – somebody who goes to meetings and records the minutes, knows what documents are where and what's in them, and is the general steward of information whether it be needed by Test, Programming, PM, Technical Writers, Tech Support, or Executives. Just like people read the paper to discover what going on in the world, a project journalist, whether it be literal (like the Documentarian) or figurative (the tester) seems to be a useful idea as long as good software relies on fast feedback and good information to make good decisions about the value that's being delivered.