



Why it matters
what I'm called.

Karen N. Johnson

What is your title?

- QA Specialist?
- Software Tester?
- Software Engineer?
- Test Automation Specialist?



A title can add to your influence.

“In some cultures a “proper” title can get you access to people you normally would have trouble to get attention from.”

Henrik Andersson
Sweden, CEO & consultant at House of
Test



A title can determine your salary.

“Our tiny company was acquired by a giant company. They insisted our manager give us new titles that matched their taxonomy for job titles & pay scales.”

Lisa Crispin
US, Tester, ePlan Services Inc., a Paychex
Company



A title can establish boundaries.

“It matters to me what my title is because I feel I am claiming my own areas of expertise and setting some boundaries of what my skills are and are not.”

Lanette Creamer
US, Consulting Software Tester



A title can get you office perks.

“In some small companies, financial perks are hard to come by. But getting an office is often “the” symbol of having made it.”

Karen N. Johnson
US, Software Test Consultant



A title is how you introduce yourself.

“Introducing myself to a non-software person for the first time, it is easier to get away with being an IT-consultant instead of using software tester. I will at least avoid getting that glance when the other person does not understand.”

Sigge Birgisson,
Sweden, IT-consultant/Software Tester



A title can help with finding a job.

“My only “concern” is that I’m also a team lead. In a small company, it didn’t matter that it wasn’t part of my title, but now being part of a large multinational corp, it could get lost – affecting my career and how soon future opportunities open up.”

Philip Daye
US, Software Quality Engineer, Sr.,
Yahoo



A title can be an accomplishment.

“I don’t even think about my title and the only reason I had to think about it recently was because we had a shuffle around and had to sign new documentation. If I was being honest, I would like to have Director or a similar sounding title in the future. That is one of my aims (to have the responsibilities of one, not just the title).”

Steveland Daniels
United Kingdom, Tester

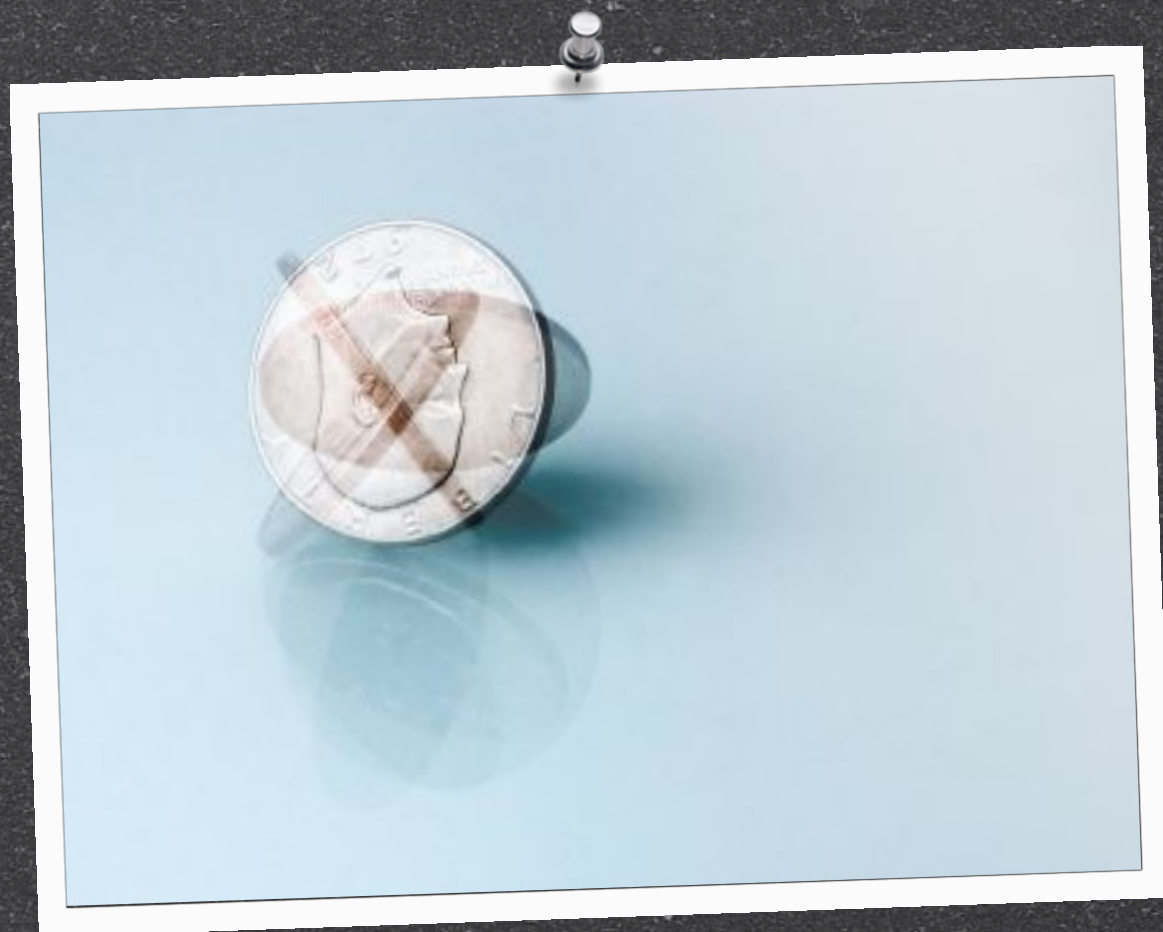


A title can create a sense of personal identity.

“I’ve met people who are passionate about their titles. It seems for some people their title is part of their personal identity.”

Karen N. Johnson
US, Software Test Consultant





on the other side of the coin...

Influence is earned not given by a title.



“I couldn't care less about my title. I accept the social convention of having one but that's about as far as I go. They only help differentiate on a very basic level. Things like I'm a TESTER and not a PM, developer or bell-boy.”

Oliver Erlewein
New Zealand, Test Manager

Pay does not always correlate to titles.



“Big consulting companies polish these “consultants” with fancy titles and meaningless certification and sell them to the ignorant and naive customers.”

Henrik Andersson
Sweden, CEO & consultant at House of
Test

Boundaries can be confining.



“When I'm testing, I prefer to be called a software tester. I don't really care about my title. When I join a team I consider it my job to figure out what they need and deliver on that need regardless of what my title is. Many times that's testing, sometimes it's not. As long as the client is happy with what they are getting, I'm okay with what they call me. ”

Mike Kelly
US, Partner, DeveloperTown (alternative job title would be "Consultant")

Office perks can be awarded in many ways.



“One small company I worked at gave employees all sorts of unique perks: tickets to plays, sports events and days off to spend time with our families.”

Karen N. Johnson
US, Software Test Consultant

Offices mean little in an agile environment.



“I sat with the team in the project room. We sat side to side, day by day and we worked together incredibly well. There was no hiding in offices.”

Karen N. Johnson
US, Software Test Consultant

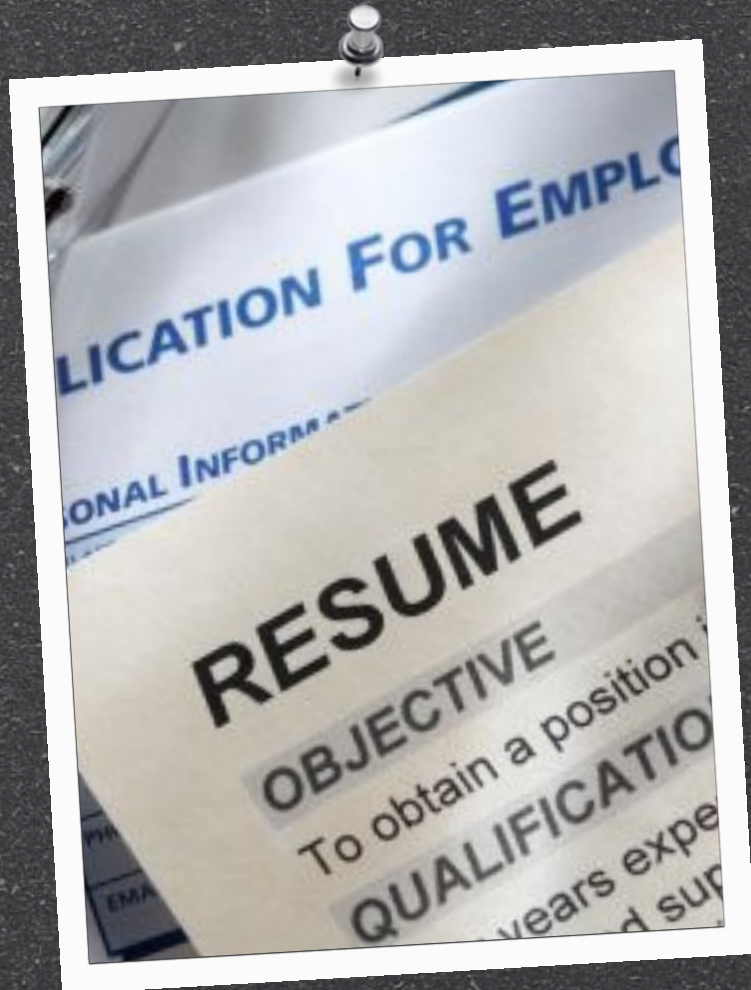
You can tell people about yourself not just your title.



“Test Consultant, normally when people ask what I do for a living, this means I can tell a story around the title (which can lead to very interesting conversations or it’s just an “Oh... you work with computers”).”

Chris Saunders
New Zealand

You can find work without recruiters or a job title.



“I don’t like beginning conversations with potential new clients by focusing on either a job title or a pay rate. I’d rather find out if I can help them first.”

Karen N. Johnson
US, Software Test Consultant

Our accomplishment in our careers will unlikely be measured by a job title.



“I’d rather define myself by the work that I do and the value I bring rather than by a title or position on the org chart: you can call me “tea boy” if you like, so long as my brain is engaged and mortgage paid :-)”

Iain McCowatt
Canada, Senior Consultant

Job Posting Survey

by Elisabeth Hendrickson

- The survey was restricted to the U.S.
- Results were not evenly spread throughout the U.S. states; some states such as California were more heavily represented.
- The result set included 164 positions.
- 80% of tester job ads requested some kind of programming skill.
- The most popular title was “QA Engineer” (99 of the listings).
- 136 of the titles contained “QA” compared with only 32 containing the word “Test.”

Are you the product gatekeeper?

“Back in the 90s I worked as Director of QA for an internet startup where my title was “Quality Boss”. I thought it was cool at the time – I felt so powerful, I decided if something was ready to release. Looking back, I’m horrified by it. Such a quality police mentality. I’m glad I’ve learned better.”

Lisa Crispin
US, Tester, ePlan Services Inc., a Paychex
Company



Another view of a gatekeeper...



“I have been the gatekeeper. The software was not released to production unless I gave a thumbs up vote to do so. I recognized the company owner valued my opinion. It was not a case of control or policing but that my opinion of whether the software was ready to ship or not would be based on facts. Also my opinion was rarely out of sync with the team’s opinion. I never let it get to my head; I realized the responsibility I had.”

Karen N. Johnson
US, Software Test Consultant

What's on my business card?



Thank you!