COULD I TELL YOU A STORY?

Once upon a time, I was a QA manager. The team was building a new version of the company's primary software product.

It was not the company, the product or even the key goal of the product – it's what happened *around* the product and the project that I learned a few lessons worth a chat.

I WAS NOT INVITED TO THE KEY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE PROJECT.

THE WORD IN THE HALLWAYS WAS THAT THE NEW VERSION OF THE PRODUCT WOULD RESOLVE PERFORMANCE ISSUES.

THE GOALS OF THE PROJECT WERE BEING DEVELOPED WITHOUT A TESTING STRATEGY.

THE SITUATION

GET INVITED TO KEY MEETINGS

What I learned:

- Participate in goal setting.
- Understand the broader strategy.
- Understand your role in that strategy.

If you can demonstrate that your work is part of the solution

then you may gain a seat at the table,

else you lose a chance to shape or inform the goals.

If you hear the goals of a project early on

then you can determine a test strategy that works towards the goals

else your work won't be in alignment with the wider project.

MEANWHILE ... THE NEW PRODUCT WAS STARTING TO SOUND AS COMFORTING AS A PIECE OF WARM APPLE PIE.

THE WARM APPLE PIE
NEEDED TO BE DECONSTRUCTED
TO CREATE "SMART" GOALS.

Ingredients for SMART

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-Bound

DECONSTRUCTING HIGH-LEVEL AND AT TIMES EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE INTO TACTICAL TESTS REQUIRED TRANSLATING DESIRES TO SPECIFIC TESTS.

CONTINUALLY MAPPING THE WORK TO REFLECT THE OFFICE CONVERSATIONS TOOK REPEATED MAPPING TO "SMART" TESTS AS WELL AS SOCIALIZING THE WORK.

THE STRATEGY

TEST STRATEGY IS NOT JUST A DOCUMENT

Build a strategy

- Read product plans and surrounding documents.

- Know the assumptions

- Figure out the timing

- Plan ahead

- Know your tools & tactics

- Pay attention; watch for change throughout the project.

If you write a test strategy

then check that you execute what you said you would,

else your executives will know that your strategy was not used.

STRIKING THE BALANCE
BETWEEN PROVIDING
DETAILS AND
OVERLADING
COMMUNICATION
REQUIRED BALANCE.

COMMUNICATING THE
TESTING WORK. MADE THE
WORK REAL AND VISIBLE.

ACKNOWLEDGING SOME
PEOPLE DIDN'T WANT THE
DETAILS OF TESTING.

THE COMMUNICATION

A PLAN TO SHARE STATUS WAS PERHAPS AS IMPORTANT AS THE WORK

What I learned:

- Status updates along the way were needed.

- The "ups and downs" of test results caused confusion and misinterpretation.

- Determining what level of information to share was a challenge.

If you report on defects

then focus on the impact, the risk and likelihood of the issue,

else your executives won't understand the value of addressing the defects.

PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF THE PROJECT WANTED INFORMATION TOO.

SOME UPDATES HAPPEN IN THE HALLWAY, WILL YOU BE READY FOR THAT?

BEING ABLE TO EXPAND AND COLLAPSE DETAILS MIGHT NOT BE EASY BUT MAYBE NECESSARY.

THE STORY

LEARN HOW TO TALK TO THE EXECUTIVES

What I learned:

- Keep your updates brief.

- Be on point.

- Don't lose the big picture.

- Be able to provide details when asked.

If you talk in testing tools

then focus on the how the tool helped achieve the goals,

else your executive's attention may drift,

and they won't believe you understand the larger picture.

If you talk in testing lingo

then focus on what was discovered and what matters

else your executives might not understand what is important.

MY CURRENT POSITION IS AT GRAINGER.

MY ROLE IS DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING EFFECTIVENESS.

MY PRESENTATION IS BASED ON MY PAST WORKING EXPERIENCE AND MY VIEWS ARE SOLELY A REFLECTION OF MY PERSONAL THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCE.

THE DISCLAIMER

THANK YOU!

Contact info:

@karennjohnson

KarenNicoleJohnson@gmail.com