

THE TCoE BENEFITS & WHY YOUR COMPANY SHOULD BUILD ONE

White Paper



Introduction

In today's highly competitive market, a company needs speed and agility to stay in the game. Customer demands increase regularly, as they ask for things faster, better, and cheaper. With so many options available, they won't hesitate to jump to a competitor. Project level quality assurance may not be enough any longer to keep the SDLC efficient while increasing the reliability of products. Companies need to realize quick growth while keeping profit margins high. This kind of pressure can easily make ineffective teams crumble.

Traditional testing teams have different managers that use different processes, utilize separate resources, and often have varied business focus. As a result, quality is often inconsistent and customers can be left less than satisfied. Testing cycles are generally longer, releases are often delayed, and the lack of shared resources increases costs.

One possible solution is the up and coming QA methodology consisting primarily of creating a Testing Center of Excellence (TCoE). A TCoE utilizes three key ingredients to govern the delivery of high quality: people, process, and technology. That sounds simple enough and you may be thinking that you already use those three things. But a TCoE does much more than that.

A TCoE establishes clear goals and defines strong processes to achieve them. It utilizes multiple skill sets and top QA tools to accelerate innovation, ensure quality, and drive down risk. While so far only a small portion of the companies today have built one, the TCoE model has proven results in optimization of quality and performance and has shown improved communication and goal alignment between business and IT teams.



With a TCoE, you can do more with a limited budget by creating a QA command center that uses standardized methodologies combined with automation and informative metrics to more efficiently allocate flexible resources, decrease time to market, and reduce costs. The TCoE creates a culture of quality within the organization and establishes a cycle of continuous process improvement while helping to advance the training and careers of its members.

Establishing a Testing Center of Excellence requires forethought and planning and strong support from within. If the entire company isn't onboard with it and understanding of the necessary adjustments in management and organization, the TCoE may fail before it's even realized. Implemented incorrectly, a TCoE will cost time, money, and credibility.

The First Step: Assess Readiness

The internal support and commitment necessary for the success of a TCoE must be gathered and conveyed to the entire company. It's important that everyone understand and stand by the notion that quality is a priority. Prior to establishing a TCoE, a full impact analysis should be performed and reviewed by key stakeholders. Resources should be assessed, impacts of the changes estimated, and possibly an investment of external support will be needed.

Organizations that have already aligned with standards such as CMMi will be much more receptive to the changes required for a TCoE. Determining or obtaining a core team with solid QA skills is also a readiness indicator. This team needs to be familiar with, or receive training for, standardized testing tools that are necessary for a successful TCoE. A company with well-defined process owner roles, flexible funding, and strong internal decision making will see results sooner than a company lacking any of these.



Phasing

Too much change done too quickly can create discord, increase resistance, and risk the loss of valuable and necessary internal support. For this reason, QA Mentor recommends phasing in the TCoE establishment. This will reduce problems and increase both credibility and readiness, while also allowing the teams to find integration issues early and handle them.

Phase 1 – Introduction and Foundation

It's important to ensure full executive support at this stage before advancing any further, which may be a long process. Communication at this, and all other phases is crucial to encourage company involvement, encourage support, and to understand how changes may affect others.

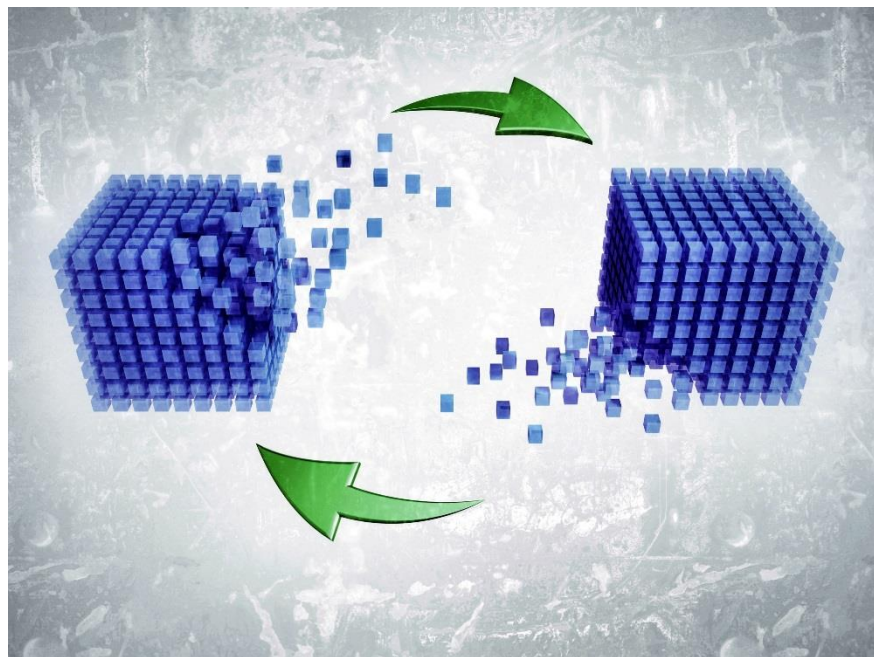
While that is ongoing, the QA team will set the foundation for a strong and effective TCoE by defining the current process and identifying areas for improvement. The team should establish goals and the major milestones with their associated timeline. Standards and policies associated with the QA process are also outlined, and measurable quality standards are defined at this time.

Phase 2 – Optimize Sharing

A major part of a successful TCoE is shared resources. Instead of reinventing the wheel for each project, teams share tools, techniques, hardware, and skills. At this phase, the team should focus on reducing redundancy by standardizing the QA tools and techniques. By collaborating with the entire IT team, the QA group can determine the areas suitable for initial automation.

The team should also focus on assessing the current skills of the team members and determine if any are lacking. This will help identify whether training is necessary, if new employees will need to be hired, or if outsourcing for missing skills will be required.

Integration assessment is also important at this phase. Determine how the TCoE will interface with management, internal teams, and service providers. Establish those processes early and communicate the changes to everyone involved while allowing for feedback.



Infrastructure and tools are vital to the TCoE and this phase is a good point to assess all of the tool needs and estimate the costs of purchase, training, and maintenance.

Phase 3 – Centralized Services

This third phase marks the beginning of quality assurance as a centralized service. QA may still have individual teams that retain some independence, but each will benefit from having a central service area. Application quality will improve by giving the team and stakeholders more visibility into the quality process and progress. Depending on the size of the TCoE, individual core teams may be established for each area: automation, governance, and asset management. By or during this phase, full automation should be integrated into the process using the tools assessed and purchased in the last phase. The final part of this phase involves the establishment of a continuous improvement program.

Phase 4 – Quality First

At this final phase, it's clear that the company is focused on excellence. Quality is continuous and fully integrated into the process as opposed to being an expensive afterthought. Whether in-house or outsourced, a flexible resource pool is established at this phase that will maximize the ROI and provide quantitative test management.

Final Notes

Establishing a TCoE is a lot of work and is not without risks. However, QA Mentor believes the well-established benefits outweigh the potential difficulties. Before long, companies may not have a choice in order to stay competitive. Partner with QA Mentor to help establish your TCoE and get ahead of the game. We can support your TCoE effort with our strong experience and reduce the time it takes to get it fully operational. You can see benefits earlier by allowing us to help you define new standards and better utilize current ones. Achieve excellence without losing agility with QA Mentor at your side.

About the Author

The author, Ruslan Desyatnikov, is the CEO & President of QA Mentor. After working as the Global Head of Testing at Citi, Ruslan created QA Mentor to fill the gap he has witnessed in QA service providers during his near 20 years in QA. With Ruslan's guidance, unique services and methodologies were developed at QA Mentor to aid clients in their QA difficulties while still offering a high ROI. Ruslan offers monthly seminars aimed at imparting his extensive testing knowledge that can be applied to start-ups as well as large companies.

About QA Mentor

QA Mentor is independent software testing company and top provider of 37 different Quality Assurance testing types, with 24 different services – several of which are not found at any other company. With a global presence in 8 different countries, a staff of 100, and a pool of over 1500 crowdsourced testers, QA Mentor uses an effective and unique combination of onshore and offshore resources to keep costs low for our clients. QA Mentor aims to bring quality to the forefront of software development and become the central figure in Quality Assurance with an active QA community full of engaging discussions and resources.



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