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In 2011, Alberto Savoia famously declared testing to be dead [1]. Since then, we have seen the further mainstreaming of agile methodologies, the push for increased test automation, a focus on continuous delivery, and the infiltration of "smart" everything into all facets of our lives.

So, where does this leave today's testers—and, perhaps more importantly, where is the testing profession headed?

Executive Summary

The inaugural TechWell State of the Testing Profession survey sets a baseline measurement of attitudes about the testing profession, with an eye toward repeating the survey annually to track trends and changes. The survey not only collected data on the current state of testing, but it also gathered feedback on evolving tester roles and responsibilities, new skills and knowledge requirements, and opinions on the outlook for the testing profession.

The data collected from 529 software professionals, including testers, managers, developers, analysts, and consultants, suggest that the testing profession isn't going away; it's just going to be different. See appendices 1 and 2 for respondents' detailed demographic and organizational information.

Testing is at a crossroads. With widespread agile adoption, the proliferation of mobile and embedded technology, the rising popularity of DevOps, the demand for increased automation and technical skills, and the push for testers to become domain experts, these initial survey results provide an invaluable starting point for tracking the ongoing fitness—or failure—of the testing profession.

Key
Findings

State of the Testing Profession Survey:
Key Findings

1. Testing isn't dead
2. Organizations are employing testers—and will continue to do so
3. Tester roles and responsibilities are evolving
4. Testers want to keep testing
5. DevOps and mobile continue to grow and challenge testers
6. Quality is up; post-release defects are down

1. Testing isn't dead

So, is testing dead? According to 84% of survey respondents, the short answer is no. Additionally, respondents almost universally believe that as long as humans are accountable for software, we will need testers, and more than 75% of participants support "tester" remaining a distinct role within a team. (Fig. 1)

While it's true the tester role doesn't appear headed for extinction (as stated previously, half of respondents said their organizations added testers in the past twelve months, and most think they will continue to employ testers [Figs. 3 & 4]), it does appear to be headed in a different direction. Almost all respondents agree that the role of tester needs to be transformed, with 71% predicting a shift toward more technical testers and 70% noting how the widespread adoption of agile practices is significantly changing how testers work. (Fig. 1)

Where do you see testing in five years?
(Fig. 2)

"Testing is a broad discipline. I believe we will see more maturity around automated approaches and perhaps more distinction between manual/automated/performance—all of these should be recognized as specialities in their own right."
—Performance Test Analyst

"Ensuring the end product is accepted and adopted by the user group. Particularly in our environment of inward facing applications, stakeholder/scope management has become a critical part of ensuring the systems are deployed on time and budget."
—Test Manager

"Pretty similar to where it is now. But with agile being the popular trend, testers can't be isolated, but need to be integrated within the development teams. I feel that the testing role will still remain the role that ensures quality prevails."
—QA Analyst

"The boundary between tester and software engineer will have dissolved completely."
—ScrumMaster

"More coordination and support of non-QA doing testing, more poly-skilling, more automation, more analysis and coordination of process improvements."
—QA Manager

"Less pronounced within IT sector, more blended with development roles. 'Tester' will be more well known as a term on the business/UAT side."
—Test Manager