Be A Better Tester,
Be A Beta Tester

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COMPENDIUM DEVELOPMENTS

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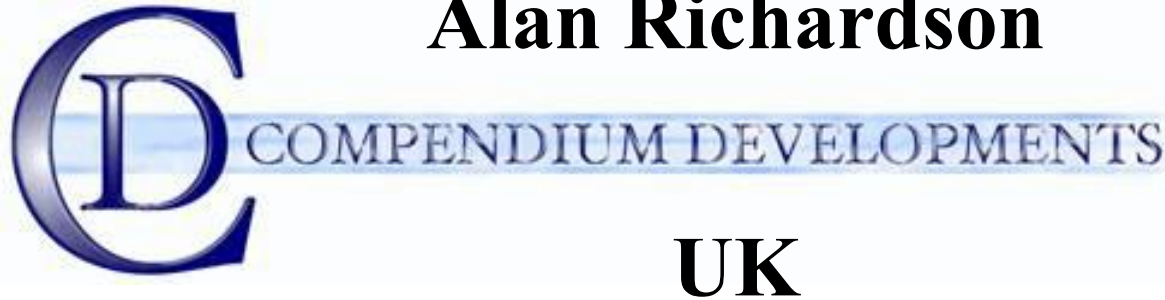
At the end of a testing day, how many testers go home and practise testing? Everyone I know that excels in a particular field; musician, sportsman, programmer, writer, hypnotist, whatever... practises.

I'm a professional tester (I get paid to test) and I beta test in my spare time.

Find out how & why

Animated gifs from www.feebleminds-gifs.com

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The Ad

Beta testing is a great way to practise testing, and by beta testing, testers can:

- Try out techniques that they don't get to use in their day job.
- Try new tools
- Break software

- Help improve software
- Get free software
- and more...

You will learn:

- How to find, and get involved in, beta test programmes
- Why we should spend our free time testing
- What developers want from their beta testers
- The responsibilities of a beta tester
- Cheap & free tools to help you beta test
- How to make the best use of your beta testing time
- How to setup and control beta test environments
- Effective techniques for adding value to the beta test programme quickly and making sure you learn as much as possible as quickly as possible

And More :

- **Have Fun**. Now you can enjoy testing. *Laugh* as you test. *Smile* when you test.
- When we finish you will know how and why to become better testers through beta testing.
- And who knows? Perhaps continuing to improve your testing skills might help you increase your success in your day job. Hmmm…

What is Beta Testing?

"Operational Testing at a site not otherwise involved with the software developers."

BS 7925-1

What Do *I* mean?

"Downloading Stuff off the internet and Testing the **** out of it."

**** = Bugs

The Big Blue Bumper Book of Beta Testing

What Stuff?

- Big/Small
- Commercial/OpenSource/Shareware
- Software that:
  - *You* find Useful
  - *Interests You*
  - *You want* to use & own
  - <u>You</u> want to Test

> *"Sometimes I test it whether they want it tested or not!"*
>
> Alan Richardson
> Compendium Developments

But…

- I get **paid** to test
- I test *ALL* day
- I've got _better_ things to do with my time
- I'd rather just buy the software – *let the developer _test it!_*
- **Time** is money
- I don't *need _to practise_*

Why?

Because I want to!

- I want…
  - to be a better tester
  - to use software that works (on the cheap!)
  - to bring back the Joy

> *"Beta Testing Software is exciting, challenging and a great learning experience"*
> *The Big Blue Bumper Book of Beta Testing*

Motivation for Change

"...when our performance and attitude become jaded and weary, self-effacing and apologetic, there are two options. One is to eventually stop performing, bored with the whole thing. Which means one less jaded magician in the world, which is a good thing for the rest of humanity. But the other option is to completely re-discover the art, and change ones idea of what magic is and what ones role as a magician might be. This way, we get to experience why being a magician is the best job in the world. We can go out to perform, curious as to what the evening might bring, and what we might learn for ourselves."

Absolute Magic, Derren Brown, 2001, 1st edition

The Context of Joy

Industrial

- Methodology
- Industry Standard Tools
- Meetings
- Politics
- Test Plans

$

"If they don't hate you, you're not doing your job properly."
Alan Richardson
Compendium Developments

Beta Testing

- Agile
- Effective Tools
- Communication
- Focus
- Learning

"If they don't love you, you're not doing your job properly."
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What developers want from their beta testers

- <u>Be useful</u>

- Find Bugs, and find them fast

- Find big bugs, Find visible bugs

- Find *THE* bug

- Bugs bugs bugs bugs bugs

- Feedback, Comments & Recommendations
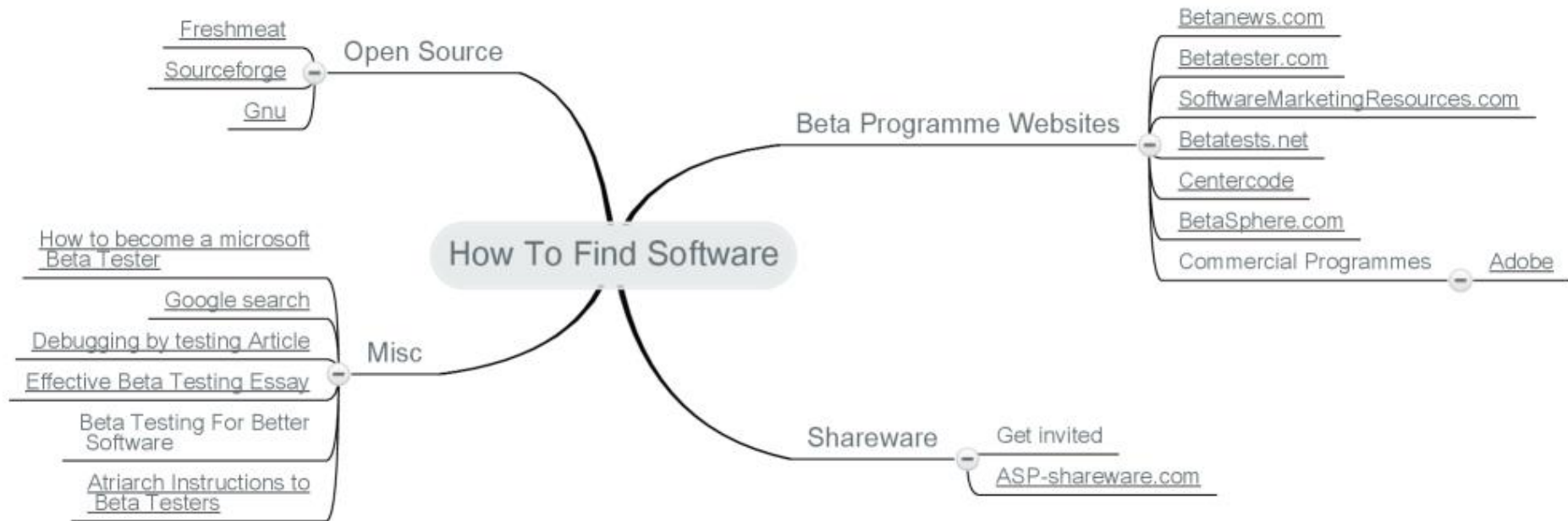
Where & When

The Execution Context Explored

- Spare Time

- Short Bursts (sessions)

- Planning time – minimal but essential

- Little rework

How?

- Getting Software
- Developer Communication
- Knowing what to test
- Best use of time
- Your responsibilities
- Tools
- Environments

How to find software to beta test?

Freshmeat
Sourceforge
Gnu
Open Source

Betanews.com
Betatester.com
SoftwareMarketingResources.com
Betatests.net
Centercode
BetaSphere.com
Commercial Programmes — Adobe
Beta Programme Websites

How To Find Software

How to become a microsoft Beta Tester
Google search
Debugging by testing Article
Effective Beta Testing Essay
Beta Testing For Better Software
Atriarch Instructions to Beta Testers
Misc

Get invited
ASP-shareware.com
Shareware

How to communicate with developers

- Simple, Clear, Direct

- Relevant scenario information
  - they don't know what test you were trying to do unless you tell them

- Screenshots & Movies

- Files, test data

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How do you know what to test?

- Ask the developer, they know…
  - what they've done
  - what they're nervous about
- What would *you* do with the tool?
- It probably basically works…go eXtreme
- Observation, follow hunches

Common Shareware Defects

Quick wins

- Regression Testing
  - Testing of related areas may be minimal, depends on experience of the developer

- Do, change, cancel, do, cancel,change, ok, change, cancel, change, do (Cyclic tests)

- Saving & Loading

How to make the best use of your beta testing time

- How to practise testing
- Sessions
- Planned
- Focussed

One Approach (of many)

- Session 1
  - Tool Overview (learning)
- Session *
  - Objective for the session
    - Pick a technique, any technique
    - Pick a feature, any feature
  - Plan the session
  - Do & Document
  - Report…session ends…

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One Approach to Learning a New Technique
- Choose the software to test
- Read about the technique
- Review the technique *with the software in front of me*
- Apply the technique
- Document the testing
- Review my experience

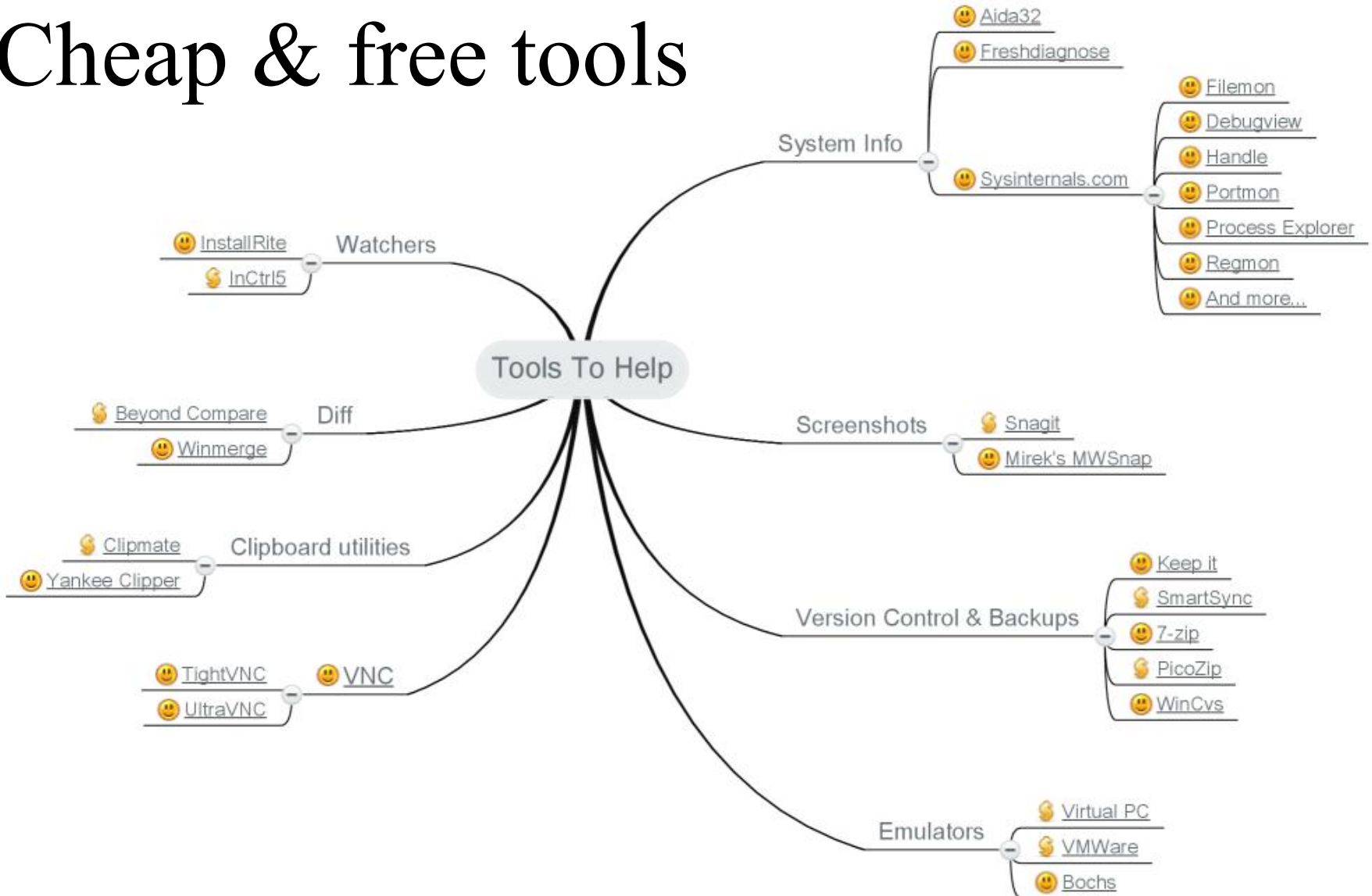</div>

Responsibilities of a beta tester

- Be better than the other beta testers
  - You're a professional
- Provide relevant information
- Do something different

"Thank you, you have earned your registration code to the full release version"

Cheap & free tools

Free

Cheap

Tools To Help

System Info
- Aida32
- Freshdiagnose
- Sysinternals.com
  - Filemon
  - Debugview
  - Handle
  - Portmon
  - Process Explorer
  - Regmon
  - And more...

Watchers
- InstallRite
- InCtrl5

Diff
- Beyond Compare
- Winmerge

Clipboard utilities
- Clipmate
- Yankee Clipper

VNC
- TightVNC
- UltraVNC

Screenshots
- Snagit
- Mirek's MWSnap

Version Control & Backups
- Keep it
- SmartSync
- 7-zip
- PicoZip
- WinCvs

Emulators
- Virtual PC
- VMWare
- Bochs

How to setup and control beta test environments

- Feel Responsible

- Backups are essential

- Virtual PCs are great

- Multiple Operating Systems

- Removable hard drives (caddies)

> "Paranoia is the tester's friend"
> *Alan Richardson*
> *Compendium Developments*

Your life, Your hands, Your control

Ship It

- Attitude
- Enjoy It
- Do it, for the next 30 days…
  - Check out the tools, use them, test some software, communicate with the developer, vary and repeat

> *"It's a whole new job"*
> *Absolute Magic, Derren Brown*

Do It

Get Better at it,
Get Beta Testing

For more information and resources, visit…
www.compendiumdev.co.uk/eurostar2003