



How testers can  
become agents of  
change in their  
organizations





## ➤ Introduction

Take a moment and think about what makes your job difficult. Chances are there are ineffective tools or processes in place that are holding you back. They might even be backed by a mindset that seems too engrained to challenge.

Now consider what you'll do about those difficulties. It's easy to sit back and complain, but it's possible – and far more beneficial – to break the cycle by enacting change.

Today's technology leaders understand that software quality is critical, but many still see testing as a bottleneck. So how can you demonstrate that with the right approach, the reverse could also be possible? The fact that this is still the mindset at many organizations presents a significant opportunity for those who are willing to see things differently.

It isn't always easy, but with the right skills and techniques you can challenge the status quo, share your vision, and become an effective agent of change. Read on to learn more.



## ➤ Identifying opportunities for change

Dave White, Automation Test Manager at Specsavers, realized his team needed to start testing earlier to ensure the company could succeed with a large-scale infrastructure modernization and pivot to a software-led business strategy.

White knew testing would play a critical role in delivering industry-leading digital services faster. [He set out to implement a modern approach to testing](#) that would ensure complete coverage in a CI/CD pipeline and shorten testing timelines significantly – from four days to less than five minutes, in some cases.

Generally, there are three types of change: tools, processes, and people. The push for change in these areas can come from anywhere in the organization. Agents of change can be doers, leaders, or even outsiders impacted by another department's processes.

As you think about what in your organization needs to change, one of the best places to start is with complaints (from users inside or outside the organization, product owners, or other stakeholders). Beyond any complaints, using a “**Start, Stop, Continue**” model can help identify opportunities for change. Taken from Agile retrospectives, this model offers a straightforward way to have conversations about what your team should stop doing (because it's not working well), what your team

should start doing (because there's an opportunity for growth and improvement), and what your team should continue doing (because it is working well).

With an enterprise test management solution, the team has unified testing across a diverse toolset. They can quickly verify test coverage with improved visibility across a fully automated pipeline, as well as save time on new projects by sharing and reusing test assets. According to White, this change has enabled testing to play a critical role in delivering faster without compromising on quality.

“Software testing isn't seen as something that's done at the very last moment,” White says. “It's engrained in the entire pipeline. The earlier we can do testing – the earlier we can find defects – the better the whole project can become.”

## ➤ Enacting change in your organization

Once you've identified an opportunity for change, there's still a long road in front of you to make that change a reality. It won't always be easy, but when you get to the end it will be immensely rewarding.

**Getting started with change requires the following activities:**

### ➤ Know your audience

To gain buy-in for change, you need to understand your audience, including the types of evidence that are most likely to persuade them and the best way to present that evidence to them. In this case, taking a “What's in it for me?” (aka WIFM) approach can help you frame your arguments around what your audience is most concerned about and why the change will positively impact them.

### ➤ Fully understand the problem

Next, you need to prepare to go all the way with your idea by turning it into actionable next steps. This requires you to understand the root of the problem (e.g. wasted effort, wasted money, low quality) and the best solution for your business. Specifically, you should understand your business' top priorities (e.g. attracting new customers, growing relationships with existing customers) and align the outcome of the change with those goals.



## ➤ Develop a pitch – and poke holes in it

The pitch is your chance to strut your stuff and explain exactly what you want to do. Your pitch should explain to your audience the problem with the current setup, how you propose to solve that problem, and the positive impact of making that change, all with a WIFM mindset. Essentially, you need to answer the questions of “where and why are we struggling?” and “how will change alleviate those struggles?” in a way that matters to your audience.

Plan for disagreement by identifying weaknesses in your pitch and mapping out responses to those disagreements. This planning allows you to open your mind to potential pitfalls early on and pivot as needed for maximum success.

## Anticipate pitfalls to develop a winning pitch

**Cortney Hoese**, Humana’s Principal Quality Engineer, recognized she’d need to diversify her testing toolset to support the company’s transition to a well-being company. As the company rolled out new digital solutions, she’d need to verify quality on a shorter timeline for technologies spanning from mainframe to mobile. She knew she couldn’t move as fast as the business expected with the team’s existing legacy tool and six-week testing cycle, so she took it upon herself to communicate the importance of making this change to stakeholders across the business. **Her pitch for new tooling** addressed concerns she anticipated about industry regulations and risk, among other things.

“For automation, we used to have a hammer, and we’d swing it at everything... and not everything’s a nail,” Hoese said. Her pitch was about “really getting into that space where we recognize we need more tools in our toolbox so we can adjust to [new expectations], and allowing us to get into open source, new tools, and really expand our horizons on how we attack the problem.”





## Don't underestimate testing's power to inspire organization-wide change

Transformation may not always begin with the testing team – but that doesn't mean it can't. For a large payment processing technology provider, [an organization-wide transition to DevOps began with testers.](#)

After hearing a talk on DevOps at an industry event, the organization's Vice President of Test Engineering and Delivery Acceleration was inspired to initiate his organization's own transformation. His organization was faced with the challenge of accommodating retailers' need to accept emerging payment methods, which meant the technology to accept these new payment methods would need to be developed and released quickly. He recognized an opportunity to transform not just testing, but the entire release process.

The VP sought advice from industry leaders and worked with his team to understand how DevOps release pipelines, along with a modern test strategy to support them, could help the organization and its customers achieve their goals with the delivery of high-quality, seamless payment experiences across channels.

As the development organization moved forward with Agile transformation, the testing team developed a DevOps roadmap and created a cross-functional QA center of excellence to begin sharing the idea with executives across the business.

Today, they deliver software to retailers via 15+ operational DevOps pipelines. Equipped with Agile test management from Tricentis qTest, the team has significantly reduced both testing timelines and production defects, resulting in the reduction in deployment time from 14 hours to four minutes for some critical applications.

## ➤ Tips for effective change

You will likely encounter road bumps along your journey to change, but that's normal. Along the way, there are several steps you can take to alleviate these challenges and enact change successfully.



### ➤ Identify partners

Change doesn't have to be a solo journey. Look for champions throughout your organization who have the same passion and can help represent your ideas. If you think the change is important but will be difficult to push through, the more people you have on your side, the better off you'll be.

### ➤ Learn from past successes

Talk to people in your organization who have successfully enacted change. Ask them what hurdles they had to overcome, how they framed their message, and which people were blockers or champions. Then use their learnings to support your own efforts.

### ➤ Take ownership

If you're a leader, allow your team to take ownership from start to finish, and let change happen from the bottom up. As a bonus, this type of bottom-up ownership will improve adoption and overall follow-through.

### ➤ Time it right

Often, the catalyst for change in testing is a larger-scale transformation initiative. Just because testing wasn't initially given a seat at the table doesn't mean it won't be critical for meeting your organization's larger transformation goals. If you feel testing has been overlooked, speak up as early as possible, and join forces with other groups who are making big changes to support a major business goal or pivot in strategy.

## Align testing changes with larger organizational shifts

Take Guardian Life Insurance for example. The company began making some big changes a few years ago to digitize its business, including the introduction of an Agile operating model, the migration of 200+ apps onto AWS, and significant investments in technology to improve customer service, products, and business operations. Robina Laughlin, Guardian's Assistant Vice President of IT Quality Management, knew she would need to **change her team's approach** to testing to support this transformation.

Laughlin quickly realized she'd need to replace the team's legacy test management solution to support Agile testing for a list of 400 projects and growing, including several new mobile apps.

"When you think about that scope and you think about the magnitude of all the test cases, automation and everything... you rapidly arrive at bloat," she explained. "I really wanted to move us from the HP suite [now Micro Focus] and into a more nimble, robust suite that would fit with all of the different methodologies that we were bringing in."

Laughlin made the case for modernizing testing with **Tricentis qTest** to support the business-wide transformation. With qTest, she and her team created a central source of truth across a global team and a diverse test automation toolset, improved test coverage, and achieved 50% faster test cycle times for hundreds of applications.

## ➤ Are you ready to make a change? ➤ Don't give up

It's essential to remember that becoming an agent of change is up to you. Opportunity doesn't wait for anyone, and it can pass you by quickly, so when you see an opportunity for change, get up and take it.

According to Cortney Hoese, "Disruption isn't quiet. So if you want to disrupt your company, you can't be quiet either."

Change gets derailed all the time. Whether it's the threat of death by committee, leaders who are unwilling to change, or simply a misunderstanding of the need, you cannot let an initial answer of "no" be the end of your journey. If you truly believe in the change and the positive impact it will make, don't give up. In the face of any derailments, consider pivoting and reframing the conversation or looking elsewhere within your organization for support and buy-in.