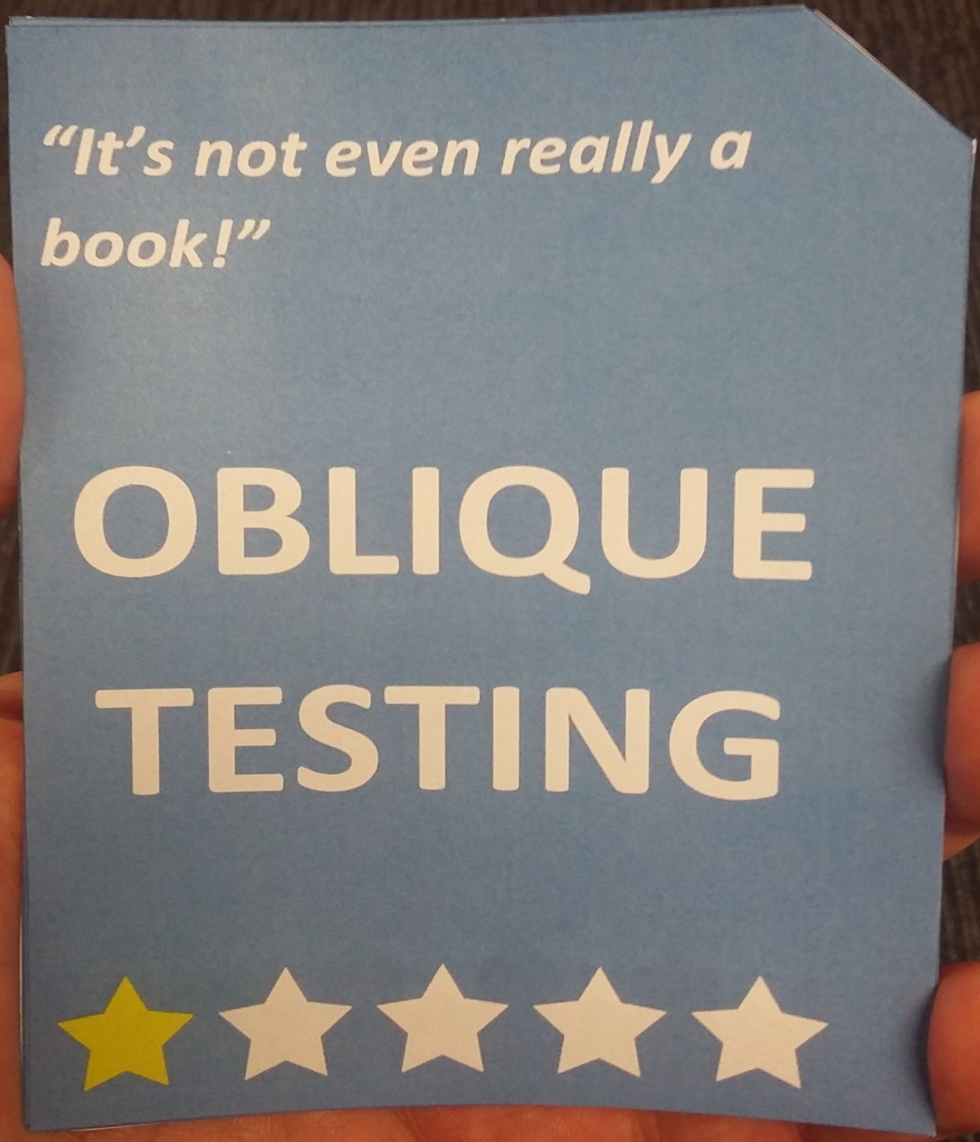

"It's not even really a book!"

OBLIQUE TESTING

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Oblique Testing

Mike Talks

This book is for sale at http://leanpub.com/obliquetesting

This version was published on 2016-03-29

Contents

Sample Intro

Hey there - thanks for looking at the sample.

This is a free resource - but it does help me if you actually check out the book, as it lets me know that people are actually reading it and using it. In case you're confused *(because it can be if you're new to LeanPub books)* – although there is a suggested price, you can slide the amount you pay down to ***FREE***. Simple.

Believe me, there's no *"provide your credit card details for this free book"* scam going on.

Even better - if you do find this book useful, drop me a line on Twitter.

I include here the first two sections which cover some of the background to the cards – to see the cards themselves, you'll have to get the book.

Enjoy!

This isn’t a book...

The review on the cover didn’t mislead you, this isn’t a book ... *it’s a resource.*

Enclosed within is all you need to produce your own set of Oblique Testing cards for use on your current project.

Right now, I’m still fine-tuning the cards using feedback I’m getting. If you have feedback, do contact me on Twitter using my handle @TestSheepNZ

Introduction

In agile testing – there is very much a focus on testing stories in progress. Of course this makes sense – stories are the area with the most amount of change, and hence “where the problems are most likely to be”.

However, even with a robust automation framework in place for regression checks, odd stuff can still happen. When we test the impact of the change from a story, we’re always limited by the imagination of our team *(not just the testers on it – everyone should be contributing test ideas)* and how well we understand the change.

As with any form of testing, occasionally we find there’s a bug goes into production we’ve missed. And though typically they’re not too big an issue *(because of course we always cover core, critical functionality in some detail)*, and also easily repaired when we need to – it still irks me because it’s “the one that got away”. And like Captain Ahab and the whale, I can get quite obsessed about chasing down those rogues.

The reality is it can be a wild goose chase. It’s easy to obsess about the defect you didn’t find, and continually check for that defect. What’s a tougher question is “what failed in our thinking that this got through?”. How do you correct a flaw in your imagination – well, you can learn more about the complexity of the system – including the nooks, crannies and *“weird flows”*. These things can make us better, but they can’t make us perfect – because human beings are infallible, and as much as we chase it, we can’t be omniscient.

We’ve also tried to use regression maps – particularly based around user based personalities – to guide us to touch upon existing behaviour in all kinds of ways. But it’s saddening how repetitive it gets.

Recently, James Bach was asking for people to engage with him about “integration testing”. I ended up talking about this with him via email, and putting together a framework of tests for a hypothetical product. Outlining those tests he asked me why I wanted to run them – what problems would I see in them? I could answer the question for about 75% of them, so I was really tempted to drop the other 25% of tests – when James reminded me, it’s okay to run a test purely for curiosity if the test doesn’t take up too much effort to run. If it’s a 5 minute test, then don’t ask for permission, but if you have an idea for something that will take the test environment down for a week, maybe you really need to know so you can sell that one.

So James reminded me, if you have the time, it’s okay to just run some extra tests. ***That was the first piece of the puzzle.***

I then recently saw a TED talk by economist Tim Harford on “How frustration can make us more creative” – where he introduced me to oblique strategies. They were introduced by record producer Brian Eno. In the studio when recording new albums with bands, they’d frequently find themselves stuck creatively.

Oblique strategies were a method of trying something new – they’d pick something at random and try and go down that path. If it didn’t work, they’d try another card. Most people started out hating the cards.

Creatively the groups were so focused on finding something new, that they were in actual fact blinding their judgement and creativity. It’s a target fixation which doesn’t allow the musicians to step back and thing bigger – what in testing is often “defocusing”. By randomly trying different alleys, they’d find some things would be blind alleys, and some things would stimulate they enough to go “this works… let’s play around a bit more with this”.

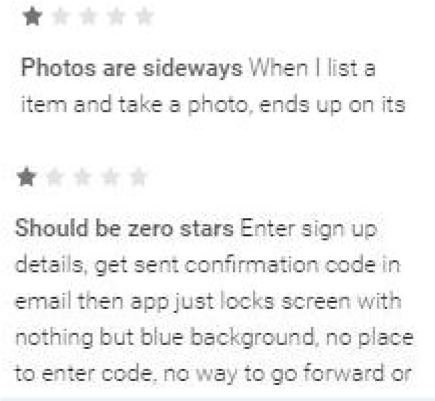
What’s important to know is the cards were generic (oblique as in the title) – they didn’t say “try that guitar riff from your last hit single”, of give a sequence of notes. It would say “try a cliché”, "change roles" or "throw out the rules". It still needed a skilled musician – and it didn't solve problems for them.

But it did encourage them to play, and to explore and experiment. Which would lead to innovation. ***That was the second piece of the puzzle.***

Finally, I was looking through Google play, thinking about downloading an app. I like to look at the overall rating, then go straight into the 1/5 ratings. What really interested was for every 1/5 rating, I thought of how I'd test to try and reduce those problems if I was on that project and testing a rerelease.

This intrigued me so much, I started to look through all kinds of app on the Google Store, noticing themes between some of the 1/5 ratings. Most importantly for most of the 1/5 it gave me general ideas for tests when I was dealing with systems – ***not just for Android applications I should point out!***

This was the final piece of the puzzle.

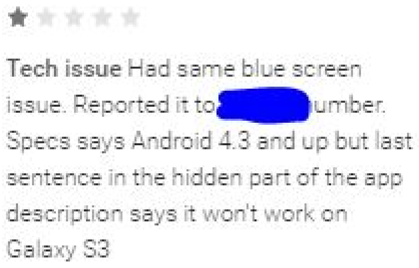


★☆☆☆☆

Photos are sideways When I list a item and take a photo, ends up on its

★☆☆☆☆

Should be zero stars Enter sign up details, get sent confirmation code in email then app just locks screen with nothing but blue background, no place to enter code, no way to go forward or



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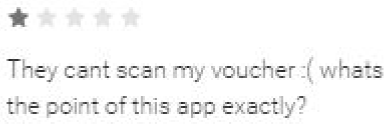
Tech issue Had same blue screen issue. Reported it to[redacted]umber. Specs says Android 4.3 and up but last sentence in the hidden part of the app description says it won't work on Galaxy S3



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They cant scan my voucher :(whats the point of this app exactly?