

Lost Art of Story Telling – New Paradigm for Learning in Testing

Some Things That I Do



Everything begins with a story
- Joseph Campbell

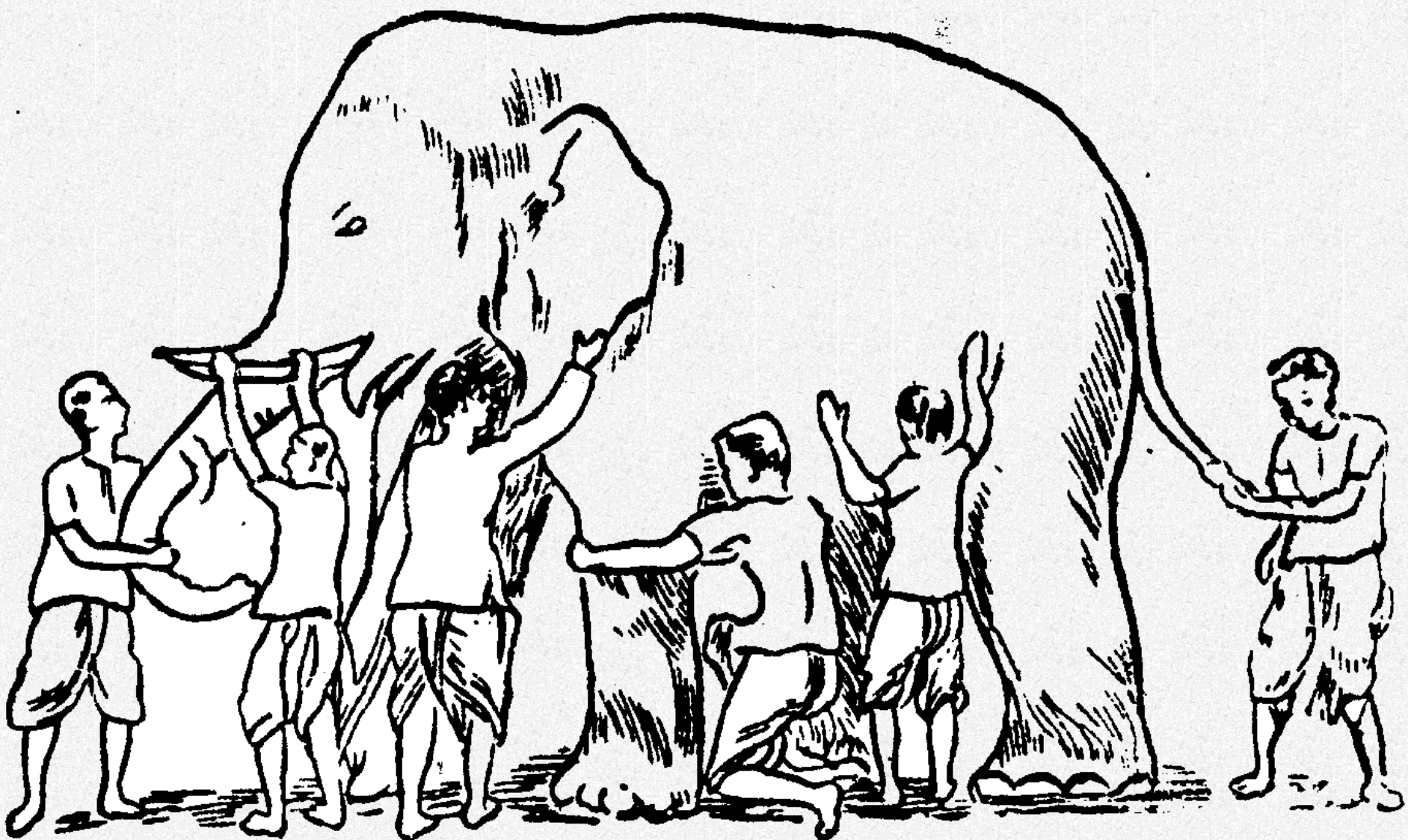
**“The universe is made of stories,
not atoms.”—Muriel Rukeyser**

"There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories."

Ursula K. LeGuin

Except Testing Society maybe...

**Everyone Looks At Things
Differently**



**Everyone Looks At Things
Differently**



<http://www.nyu.edu/projects/storytellinginperformance/description.html>

- What kinds of knowledge do we acquire from storytelling as opposed to purely cognitive or scientific knowledge?

Valued expert advice is based on knowledge. Yet knowledge alone fails to improve our judgment. Stories can create an internal foundation upon which we find the strength to alter our judgment.

Sagacity: What I Learned from My Elderly Psychotherapy Clients – Max Fuhrmann

Indian Story Telling

- Stories never end with a moral
- Stories have heroes with “flaws”
- Same story can be interpreted in many ways
- The story, if you allow it to, grows with you

The History

- Actually testers have been telling stories as long as testing has been there
- Many people beat me to the idea of story telling in testing 😞
- Some of them are
 - Karen N. Johnson (First reference I could find on story telling in testing and she refers to James Bach)
 - Jonathan Kohl (Blogs on use of story telling)
 - Cem Kaner (Scenario Testing)
 - Hans Buwalda (Soap Opera)
 - James Bach/Michael Bolton (Test framing and such)

Lessons Learned in Software Testing – Anyone?



**Good communication requires
you to anticipate the recipient
What is the story?**



What About Qualitative Performance Testing?



Regression Testing

Anecdotal Evidence

Every single time I have told stories in testing boot-camps people have come back to say, sometimes years later, that they recall my stories when they get into situations similar to my stories and the stories help them figure out solutions

Creating A Story Telling Culture

- Create time and environment for story telling
- Give people incentives for telling stories
- Teach people how to tell stories
- Convert your RCA/Lessons learned into stories

Maintaining A Story Telling Culture

- Encourage people to
 - Create testing folklore
 - Swap stories
 - Blog stories
 - Participate in story telling contests
- Don't measure. Go for qualitative feel of effectiveness

Identifying Stories

- Issue: On the day of starting the testing, we did not have setup ready despite having identified the setup. The setup document too was not updated. The actual problem was that the whole setup plan changed a day prior to start of testing. Instead of totally distributed deployment we settled on deployment on two machines. However, the concerned people did not realize the impact, did not notify the team
- Learning: Setup should be thought out clearly identifying what software, what builds one what machine, by when. There should be a document describing this and preferably the person responsible for setup should create it.
- Story: Weave tension, drama. If required exaggerate the impact. Tie it to performance and money ;-). Present the hack and present an elegant solution...

Daily Journal

- The previous incident comes from a project I did in 2001 maintained in a "Daily Project Diary"

If test cases are not clear, get some demo/setup from developers and try out some things. This will give you a better understanding of the problem and better test cases can be written/reviewed.

If sufficient clarity is not there and nothing can be done about it, then escalate it.

Problem: Kinshuk and Kamal were to review Sunil's test cases for QoS NAT interworking. Everybody agreed that test cases may not be sufficient and not enough clarity was there. We found at testing time that test cases were neither sufficient nor applicable (many of them) and had to spend time writing them.

How to become good story teller

- Prepare
 - A story begins when you observe, record and think
 - Read A PORTFOLIO OF THINKING SKILLS by Karen N. Johnson.
- Validate
 - Informally talk about the situation you have storified. Is it generic? Would people be interested? Would it be useful?
- Dramatize
 - “Character-driven stories do consistently cause oxytocin synthesis and tension grabs brain’s attention”
- Tell
 - Contextualizing the story. Make it fun, make it dramatic

Next Steps

- Now that stories are part of your blood, use them
 - In Agile ;-)
 - In scenario testing
 - In understanding the user's emotions
 - And?

Ideas are the seeds hidden in the past, exposed through the story telling – A Great Philosopher

References

Impact of Stories on Brain

HOW STORYTELLING AFFECTS THE BRAIN

NEURAL COUPLING

A story activates parts in the brain that allows the listener to turn the story in to their own ideas and experience thanks to a process called neural coupling.

MIRRORING

Listeners will not only experience the similar brain activity to each other, but also to the speaker.



DOPAMINE

The brain releases dopamine into the system when it experiences an emotionally-charged event, making it easier to remember and with greater accuracy.

CORTEX ACTIVITY

When processing facts, two areas of the brain are activated (Broca's and Wernicke's area). A well-told story can engage many additional areas, including the motor cortex, sensory cortex and frontal cortex.

<http://www.educatorstechnology.com/2014/11/the-science-of-storytelling-visually.html>

- <http://lifehacker.com/5965703/the-science-of-storytelling-why-telling-a-story-is-the-most-powerful-way-to-activate-our-brains>
- <http://karennicolejohnson.com/>
- http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/10/why-your-brain-loves-good-storytelling/?utm_content=buffer9cd23&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer
- <http://www.techwell.com/2013/04/power-story-telling-software-testers>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oP3c1h8v2ZQ>
- http://channel101.wikia.com/wiki/Story_Structure_104:_The_Juicy_Details
- <http://www.developsense.com/blog/2010/09/test-framing/>

- <http://thetesteye.com/blog/2011/10/software-testing-storytelling/>
- <http://www.techwell.com/2013/04/power-storytelling-software-testers>
- <http://www.developsense.com/blog/category/testing-story/>
- <http://www.kohl.ca/2013/creating-great-storytelling-to-enhance-software-testing-scenarios/>
- All images/media copyright of respective copyright holders