

## Walking along Testers Street!

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Walking is an exercise to body and mind. Every man has walked his life and has had interesting experiences. My walk has been interesting, so far. In this article, I share with you the notes of my first few steps as a tester:

Years back, when I stepped into Testers Street for the first time, I received a warm welcome from a few testers who also handed over a brochure to me. **“People at the end of the road are waiting to give you a job, BUT you need to possess a certificate, knock door number 37 and get certified”** was printed in bold letters, in the brochure too.

I usually have a lot of questions; I pick the best one among them and shoot it out. I asked the people who handed over the brochure, “Is this the only way a tester takes to pass through this street?”

I heard a voice from behind that appeared to me of an old man say, “It depends on where you want to go?” Ah! So there are others routes too. After listening to some success stories from the testers who handed over the brochure to me, I went to the old man with a thirst to explore more.

The old man explained the other possible way and here are some points mentioned by him:

1. It takes years to become a good enough tester, because as you follow the path of skill your personal standard of excellence will walk ahead of you, improving as you improve.
2. To grow in the community of testers you must *\*walk\** this street, not lie down next to it or in it.
3. A tester should be ready to work hard, learn and practice a (huge) list of things that helps to become a good enough tester.

Although he sounded like an expert, I was left in a position of not trusting anyone since I had now heard two different contradicting ways to become a good tester. I said to the old man, “I would want to explore more before I start trusting anyone’s words”.

“Good boy”, replied the old man. He left me puzzled as to why he complimented me despite me not trusting him.

I went to a café in the same street, ordered for a coffee and started to think on the ways I have heard. Choosing a way that suits me was a very important decision I had to take.

Before I ordered another coffee, I just looked around and to my surprise each table had at least one person who seemed to be confused. I walked to one of them and shared my confusion to get more views, which could help me take an informed decision. It is always good to hear from someone who was sipping the same flavor of coffee with same confusions in mind. I was convinced that the café owner made good profit over confusion of people, since the discussion among people there went on for a long time.

I decided to do some experiments before I took a decision on the way I wanted to traverse. The design of the experiment is this: Talk to people who have chosen different ways and listen to their stories. Also, observe carefully how testers who have chosen different way, work.

**Certified Testers:** *(I did not brand them so but they themselves claim that.)*

The talk with these people was interesting; they answered all my questions about testing terminologies and definitions. I was convinced that these people had good knowledge about testing. I then asked a question, “How long did it take for you to master?” whose answer, “4 months” surprised me.

I remembered seeing a kung fu movie where students are put to years of hardship before they become a master. I had a question, “*Is testing easier than kung fu?*”

While I was thinking of Kung Fu, I got to know that there are belts associated with these certifications, too. Black and Green are the colors that I heard from the testers with whom I was interacting with.

I decided to explore the other side of the street before I took a decision.

**Skilled Testers:** *(Again, I did not brand them but that is how they call themselves)*

In order to cross check with the answers given by black belted people from the certification community, I started off asking the same questions.

Each question I asked, I had to answer a couple of questions from them before they gave an answer. I was forced to say the context in which the question is being asked. I started to realize the importance of context and the need for me to answer a few questions before they answer my question.

To answer a specific question that I asked, I was asked to work on a machine. The attractive look of the machine made me curious to handle it and at the end of the time that I allotted to myself, I had an answer to the question. The joy of finding out an answer for

a question I had without asking anyone filled my heart. Also, I could observe and find some issues the attractive machine had in it.

I was cautious about the time I spend with these people, since staying with them for more time could bias my decisions. I had to walk out after seeking permission and I saw myself in the middle of the street again.

Now, I have seen both sides of the street and each side convinced me to be with them as long as I was with them. It's time to take a decision. I myself was as curious as you might be by now as to what my decision was. This time, I did not want to go to the café. I have seen both sides and I want to choose a side that suits me.

These are some points, I thought about:

1. The certified testers had answers to my questions but I had to memorize what they answered, to make a claim that, "I too know something".
2. The "skilled" testers had a way to make me learn from the questions I asked.
3. There might be winners and losers on both sides. A winner of one side might have become a loser, if he had chosen the other side and vice versa.
4. I need to be a winner soon; I have personal commitments too. 4 months looks attractive but the machine exercise taught me that, something that looks attractive could have lot of issues in it. Should I apply that lesson in this context?
5. There are already so many people who are certified and there are too many certifications. If I get one, I am not sure how long would that stay as a value to me or to the person who is ready to hire me. Yikes! Looking for a right certification is like looking for the needle in the haystack, to me.
6. < *The list goes on* >

The thirst to explore and need to exercise my brain made me walk towards the skilled testing side. I approached those people who gave me the machine and I said, "I think I want to be here and learn from you people. I want to be one among you". I got a reply in chorus, "Welcome to testing!"

I was then guided to a master. I was shocked for a moment to see that the master these people guided me to, was the old man with whom I had interacted earlier.

I got a chance to ask him as to why he said "Good Boy" when I said, I don't trust his words and I need to explore. He offered an explanation saying, "I did appreciate you because you wanted to learn through exploration and many people who are here started off by saying; I need to explore".

*I wish, in future I could say to some young chap "Good Boy"!*