te testing experience

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MOBILE APP AND WEB TESTING IN THE CLOUD

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Early in the Morning

Early in the morning factory whistle blows

Man rises from bed and puts on his clothes

Man takes his lunch, walks out in the morning light

It's the working, the working, just the working life

(Factory [1978], Bruce Springsteen)

Listen to the lyrics and sense the sadness of this song and his voice when Bruce sings about his father going to work and earning his money in a daily routine without enjoying it much. It is this song that has made me think of some testers whom I have come across. Some testers (unfortunately) are whiners; they are always complaining and hardly ever positive:

- Can't test this because the requirements are incomplete

- The test environment is not available and nobody told me

- Testing is never taken seriously here

- Nobody ever tells me about the software changes made

- We always get squeezed in the end

- Management doesn't care about quality, anyway

- Etc.

These testers always think in terms of problems, very much in the mode of "us vs. them". It is never the tester's problem, it is always someone else's. They feel pity for themselves. I really cannot see that these testers enjoy their work and love coming into the office (their "factory") every day. In the Netherlands we sometimes refer to them as Calimeros. Calimero is

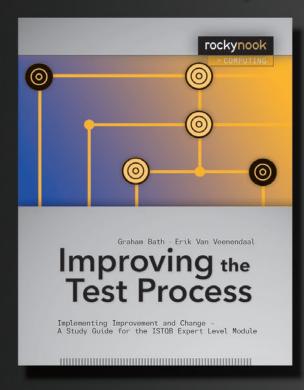a cartoon character (little duck) who always complains, whines, and is hardly ever successful at achieving things.

Managers typically dislike these Calimeros. Instead they want people who provide solutions and think positively. They already have enough issues themselves without worrying about the testers' problems. These Calimero-type testers also tend to report that no system is ever good enough to release, thereby focusing on the things that do not work instead of showing what risks have been covered and which parts (functions) are ready to be released. Their reports are hardly read, and it is almost as if these testers are merely tolerated within an organization. People around them just give up discussing things with them: "Yes we know, but this is how testers typically behave."

Do you recognize any of the above regarding yourself? Are you perhaps a Calimero or partly Calimero? If so, do not worry too much (yet); there many of you around. But please continue reading even if you do not recognize any of the above, as perhaps you can give this column to one of your fellow testers to read! Of course I am stating things very much in black and white. Nevertheless, I hope that putting it in this way will provide a wake-up call for some of them.

And in the lonely cool before dawn

You hear their engines roaring on

But when you get to the porch

they're gone on the wind

So Mary climb in

It's a town full of losers

And I'm pulling out of here to win

(Thunder Road [1975], Bruce Springsteen)

It is this song, so full of energy, that has so often inspired me to act, make decisions, take control, and be positive about the things I am doing. Of course there is a way out of here; get a grip! Start acting and behaving differently. Of course this is much easier said than done. I suggest you first take a step back and develop your own personal testing mission statement. Why are you in testing? What do you like within testing? What type of testing do you like? What would you like to achieve? And, very importantly, "What gives you energy?" and "Where is your fun factor?" Make it concrete and try to define some personal goals based on this self-evaluation. Document your personal testing mission statement and discuss it with friends, (testing) colleagues, and management (e.g. at your appraisal).

Perhaps there is too little you really like about testing. If so, get out of testing. Maybe testing is not a career path within your company and will not become one either. If you really want to become a professional tester, leave and move to another company. The economy is ok again and offers many possibilities. There are always reasons not to do something and stay in the safety zone. But do you want to be Bruce's factory worker? Take control. This is your (testing) life; make a change!.

Start thinking in terms of goals and challenges instead of problems. Earn respect from management by not only stating the issue, but also ways to handle and mitigate them. Of course (and I know), testing life is not always easy, but there are many good things in there as well. Move from "us vs. them" to "us and them", working collaboratively together with developers, users, and management. Soft skills are becoming more and more important and no agile teams want a Calimero. You will simply not survive in present times and miss all the good (fun) stuff.

Of course, as an organization you can partly facilitate this process, e.g., by providing recognition and career paths for testers. Just recently, Randy Rice made some suggestions at the STAREAST conference about how to (de)motivate your team (see list below). However, ultimately it is down to the testers themselves to act and, more specifically, act differently. Only you can make the difference!

- Set unreasonable "stretch" goals just to see how hard people will work

- Never explain your rationale for decisions

- Assign meaningless tasks

- No matter how good something is, criticize it

- Take all the credit for yourself

- Solve problems by building a new bureaucracy

- Listen...like a brick wall

- Refuse to consider ways to do the job more effectively

- Treat your team like they are machines that should never break down

When thinking about writing this column, I initially thought maybe it was just me being difficult and seeing things too negatively. However, having discussed this with some fellow test professionals from around the globe, it seems most of them also recognize this phenomenon. Regarding this way of behavior, many testers are probably in a state of unconscious incompetence. Hopefully after reading this column some of them (at least) will move to a state of conscious incompetence, or even further.

I challenge you to listen to both these Bruce Springsteen songs. Enjoy and feel the difference between the two of them, but especially let yourselves be inspired by the power and energy of "Thunder Road", and start making a difference. ◼

> about the author

Erik van Veenendaal (www.erikvanveenendaal.nl) is a leading international consultant and trainer, and a widely recognized expert in the area of software testing and quality management. He is the founder of Improve Quality Services BV (www.improveqs.nl). He holds the EuroSTAR record, winning the best tutorial award three times! In 2007 he received the European Testing Excellence Award for his contribution to the testing profession over the years. He has been working as a test manager and consultant in various domains for more than 20 years. He has written numerous papers and a number of books, including "Practical Risk-Based Testing: The PRISMA Approach" and "ISTQB Foundations of Software Testing". He one of the core developers of the TMap testing methodology and a participant in working parties of the International Requirements Engineering Board (IREB). Erik is also a former part-time senior lecturer at the Eindhoven University of Technology, vice-president of the International Software Testing Qualifications Board (2005–2009) and currently board member of the TMMi Foundation. You can follow Erik on twitter via @ErikvVeenendaal.