EXPLORE IT!: REDUCE RISK AND INCREASE CONFIDENCE WITH EXPLORATORY TESTING BY ELISABETH HENDRICKSON

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Explore It!

Reduce Risk and
Increase Confidence with
Exploratory Testing

Elisabeth Hendrickson

Edited by Jacquelyn Carter

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Review

"Reading this book taught me new skills and heuristics; but even better, it helped me channel my tester "spidey sense" more creatively and usefully. I keep this book handy at all times and occasionally do one of the practice sessions to keep my awareness keen. Explore It! helps me make sure our customers and our company get real value from our software. It'll help you too."

—Lisa Crispin, Coauthor with Janet Gregory, Agile Testing: A Practical Guide for Testers and Agile Teams

"Explore It! starts with a bang. Elisabeth catches your imagination and has filled the book with practical ideas for exploring everything from your typical GUI scenarios to testing ideas (requirements), and she even includes suggestions for programmers on how to explore low-level code. This book should be on every development team member's desk, not only testers. It is the book I carry with me whenever I introduce exploratory testing to development teams."

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About the Author

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Uncover surprises, risks, and potentially serious bugs with exploratory testing. Rather than designing all tests in advance, explorers design and execute small, rapid experiments, using what they learned from the last little experiment to inform the next. Learn essential skills of a master explorer, including how to analyze software to discover key points of vulnerability, how to design experiments on the fly, how to hone your observation skills, and how to focus your efforts.

Software is full of surprises. No matter how careful or skilled you are, when you create software it can behave differently than you intended. Exploratory testing mitigates those risks.

Part 1 introduces the core, essential skills of a master explorer. You'll learn to craft charters to guide your exploration, to observe what's really happening (hint: it's harder than it sounds), to identify interesting variations, and to determine what expected behavior should be when exercising software in unexpected ways.

Part 2 builds on that foundation. You'll learn how to explore by varying interactions, sequences, data, timing, and configurations. Along the way you'll see how to incorporate analysis techniques like state modeling, data modeling, and defining context diagrams into your explorer's arsenal.

Part 3 brings the techniques back into the context of a software project. You'll apply the skills and techniques in a variety of contexts and integrate exploration into the development cycle from the very beginning.

You can apply the techniques in this book to any kind of software. Whether you work on embedded systems, Web applications, desktop applications, APIs, or something else, you'll find this book contains a wealth of concrete and practical advice about exploring your software to discover its capabilities, limitations, and risks.

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Most helpful customer reviews

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.
I'm a big fan!
By Joseph S. Strazzere
I've been a fan of Elizabeth Hendrickson for a long time - from her Quality Tree Software days, to her Test Obsessed blog. I've had a copy of her famous "Test Heuristic Cheat Sheet" (included in the book) pretty much forever. And on my bookshelf, I even have a copy of her Bug Hunter's Journal that she sent me many years ago.

So I was thrilled when Elizabeth asked me to review a pre-publication version of her upcoming book on Exploratory Testing titled "Explore It!" I had read other books on the subject, and was less than thrilled with what I had read, so I was eager to see Elizabeth's treatment of the subject.

I wasn't surprised with the results. In her usual informal writing style, Hendrickson has packed the book with real-world, easy to understand examples sprinkled in. I found it both interesting and fun.

The chapter titles will give you an idea of the topics covered in Explore It!:
- On Testing and Exploration
- Charter Your Explorations
- Observe the Details
- Find Interesting Variations
- Evaluate Results
- Vary Sequences and Interactions
- Explore Entities and Their Relationships
- Discover States and Transitions
- Explore the Ecosystem
- Explore When There Is No User Interface

- Explore an Existing System
- Explore Requirements
- Integrate Exploration Throughout
- Interviewing for Exploratory Testing Skills
- Test Heuristics Cheat Sheet

In each chapter, Ms. Hendrickson encourages you to think, to experiment, and to explore the various aspects of your system-under-test. Then, she provides real-world, practical ideas for how to do just that.

Unless you are the kind of unfortunate tester forced to do nothing but follow a pre-written script, you already perform some exploratory testing.

In "Explore It!", Elisabeth Hendrickson teaches you how to think about Exploratory Testing, and how to make it a regular, planned, and effective part of your testing practice.

This is the kind of book I purchase for everyone on my Test Team. Maybe you should get it for team, too?

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.
Best of Both Worlds
By Noah Moerbeek
Another great book from Pragmatic Programmers that is worth reading whether you are in management, software development, analysis or testing. The thoughts are well laid out, the author is personable, the chapters are organized well, and lots of real world examples are provided from specific projects.

In my years of working in software development I have noticed to paths testers take. Chaotic, where they initially try to break the system with the most extreme choices they can, and spec testers that work closely to specific test cases. If a person applies the principles in this book to software testing it will lead to respectable feedback to the developers for addressing deficiencies (whether those are bugs or expected functionality that is lacking). The benefits of both the harsh and spec based testing will be made manifests in exploratory testing.

The chapter on chartering is excellent, because it not only proposes a good practice for software testing but for addressing a multitude of problems. It is as follows: Explore ___ with ___ to discover ____. Outside of testing software consider its application to acquiring virtues, trying out new team practices, or making any type of major "trial" to see if a process is in somehow improved.

The Test Heuristics cheat sheet is excellent for beginners, and is worth going over with your newer software testers so that they are providing value above that of just a standard user testing the software.

I would recommend this book and encourage members of my team to read it.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.
Elisabeth Hendrickson rocks!
By Cathie
I have had the privilege of attending Elisabeth's presentations in the past. This book is like that - full of useful information that can be applied immediately. I do regular SQA book club meetings with my team - this one is next on the list - i can't wait to see the team's reaction.

As someone who has been in this business a long time and read almost every tome out there, I would highly recommend this book- especially for teams that are adopting exploratory testing to supplement automation in

an agile process or planning for session based testing in a waterfall method.

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