

ISTANBUL SOFTWARE TESTING CONFERENCE

Taking action to
lead software testing

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- 30+ years of expertise in software testing and test leadership
- Author of ACT 2 LEAD Software Testing Leadership Handbook
- Recognized as an ICT Influencer 2025
- Active contributor to the testing community through voluntary work (co-founder and organizer of the Testing Assembly) and public speaking
- Married, two daughters. 70s and 80s heavy rock. Travelling, cycling, and floorball



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- Almost 30 years in testing, a bit less in agile, DevOps, and AI in all industries
- Author of 'ACT 2 LEAD Software Testing Leadership Handbook' and 'Dragons Out'
- Recognized as an ICT Influencer 2025
- EuroSTAR Testing Excellence Award, Tester of the Year, Exemplary DevOps Instructor
- Volunteer at FiSTB, ISTQB, TMMi etc.
- Married, 1 son, kayaker, snowboarder, roleplayer, a cappella singer

Do you think that...

...testing is **really understood*** by leadership
(as CxO's, directors, managers, product owners, etc.)?

* e.g., terms, test process/types/approaches,
dependencies, competencies...

Do you think that...

...testing is **really led***
on all needed leadership levels?

* e.g., direction, structure, capabilities, competencies...

Our observations

There are way too many people*
who **should understand** and **lead testing**,
but they don't.

* e.g., director, manager, product owner, tester...

Our conclusions

Testing is not led as it should, and it results in
poor quality testing and software.

Testing is poorly understood and **not valued as a profession.**

What is test leadership?

- **Leading testing and testers** through the product lifecycle
 - Inspire, encourage and empower people
 - Respect the autonomy of teams and individuals
- Ensure that testing is diverse, timely, and high quality, aligned with business needs and risks
 - Organizational level: Company and department level
 - Operational level: Project, team and individual level
- Test leadership cannot be separated from overall leadership work

Test leadership levels

Project, team,
individual

Operational level test leadership

Short term work
Focus on efficiency and effectiveness of testing
Make sure all needed testing is done

Company,
department

Organizational level test leadership

Long term work
Focus on building testing capabilities across the organization
Make sure there is direction, structure and harmony

Test leadership at organizational level

- **Building testing capabilities for the long-term**
- **Strategic leadership**
 - Empower the organization
 - Set direction, structure and harmony
- Enable good quality testing at the operational level
- Provide transparency into the current state of testing across the organization
 - Identify for systemic and team-level problems
- Take ownership - keep it in own hands!

Tools

Methods

Process

Competences

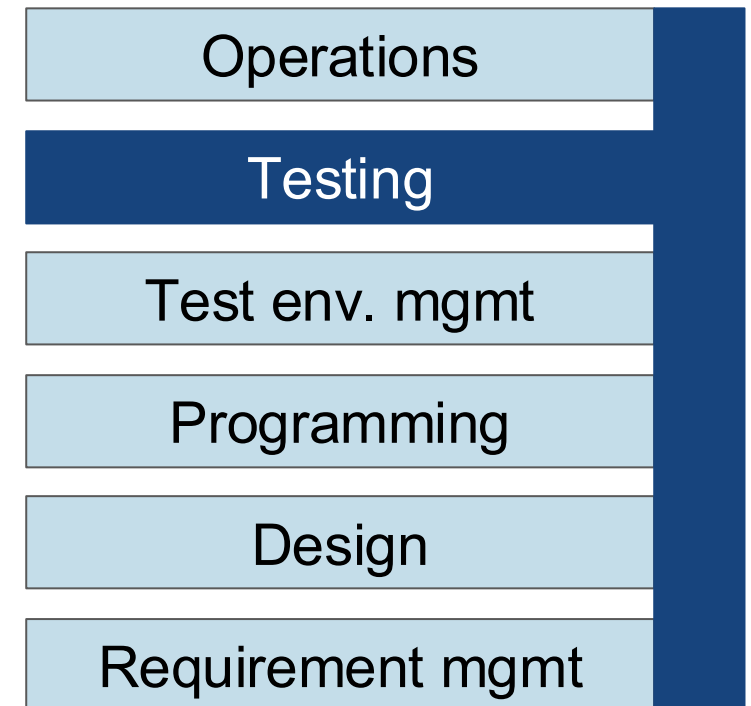
People with time

Budget

Quality culture

Test leadership at operational level

- **Operational excellence in a short-term**
- **Tactical leadership**
 - Test management and self-leadership
- Align testing to the context, as
 - User needs, business and risks
 - Development and Operation processes
 - Organizational level testing guidelines
- Help teams to get all testing done
- Lead yourself and others to the test better
- Provide transparency to test results (quality, risks)



Said by Edwards Deming

“Support of top management is not sufficient... They must know what they must do. These obligations can not be delegated.

Support is not enough: action is required.”

Out of the Crisis, Edwards Deming

What is heuristic?

Approach to problem-solving that employs a **practical method** that is **not guaranteed to be perfect**, **but is sufficient** for reaching a short-term goal.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heuristic>

The heuristic for test leadership

ACT 2 LEAD

Teach it to your leadership!

ACT 2 LEAD heuristic

Add	
Add testing into everything you do. Do not treat it as a separate function: lead it as part of the whole.	
Organizational level	Operational level
Budgets, contracts, team structures...	Plans, development process, DoD...

ACT 2 LEAD heuristic

Context

Lead testing according to your context. There is no single correct model: test strategy must fit business, risk, and goals.

Organizational level

Operational level

Business, regulations, contracts, budgets...

ACT 2 LEAD heuristic

Transparency	
Create visibility into testing capabilities, performance, risks, and outcomes. Without transparency, leadership is impossible.	
Organizational level	Operational level
Culture, capabilities, outcomes...	Test results, quality, risks...

ACT 2 LEAD heuristic

2

Balance human insight and automation. Humans explore and discover; automation verifies and scales. Both are essential.

Organizational level

Operational level

Budget, time, resourcing....

Pipelines, test automation,
exploratory testing...

ACT 2 LEAD heuristic

Learn	
Learn to test and test to learn. Use testing to generate insight and use that learning to improve quality, business and testing.	
Organizational level	Operational level
Culture, safe environment, enabling learning...	Debriefs, feedback, pair testing...

ACT 2 LEAD heuristic

Enable	
Create the conditions for quality. Build organization where testing is understood, valued, and supported through daily decisions.	
Organizational level	Operational level
Culture, budget, team structure...	Time, resourcing, tools...

ACT 2 LEAD heuristic

Adapt

Focus testing where risk matters most. Adapt test strategy to changing risks as not all areas require equal effort.

Organizational level

Operational level

Resourcing, risk identification and mitigation,
focus testing on high-risk areas...

ACT 2 LEAD heuristic

Diverse	
Promote diversity in testing approaches, methods, and people. Diverse testing produces richer and more reliable information.	
Organizational level	Operational level
Recruiting, vendors, improvement...	Test types and approaches, test environments...

A scenario example for using the heuristic

Scenario: Aligning 3 development teams

- A** Add testing to all teams and create an organizational level test strategy
 - C** Analyze what is common in the context of the three teams
 - T** Create an organizational level QA Hub for sharing test plans and learnings
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- 2** Include test automation (incl. AI) and exploratory testing to all teams
-
- L** Create learning events in form of guilds for all teams
 - E** Create a Head of Testing role to advocate testing and align teams
 - A** Teach risk-based testing to all teams and POs
 - D** Map common elements required for all teams with tailoring up approach

Key takeaways

- Leadership must be **aware and skilled** to lead testing
- Leadership must take the initiative and actively lead testing (as everything can't be delegated or outsourced)
- Two test leadership levels: **Organizational level** and **operational level**
- **Help leadership** to lead testing and testers
- Use **ACT 2 LEAD!**

Questions?

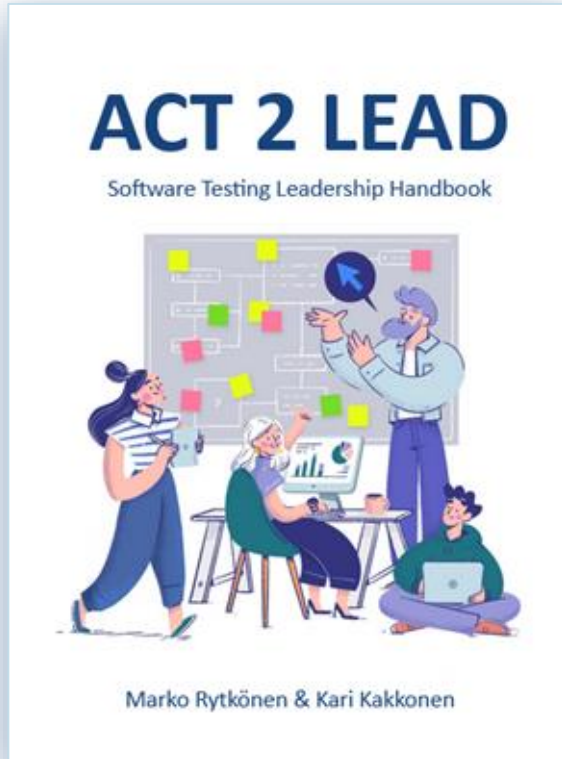


Contact and network:

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Thank you!