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Alpha Testing and Beta Testing (A Complete Guide)

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Alpha and Beta testing are the Customer Validation methodologies (Acceptance Testing types) that help in building confidence to launch the product, and thereby results in the success of the product in the market.

Even though they both rely on real users and different teams feedback, they are driven by distinct processes, strategies, and goals. These two types of testing together increase the success and lifespan of a product in the market. These phases can be adapted to Consumer, Business, or Enterprise products.

This article will give you a complete overview of Alpha Testing and Beta Testing in a precise manner.
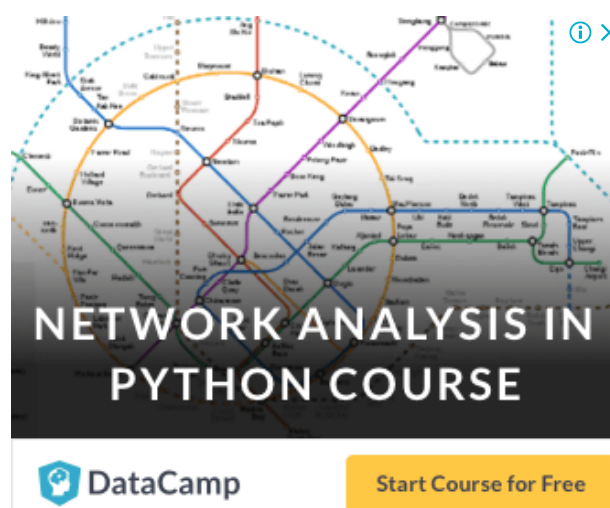
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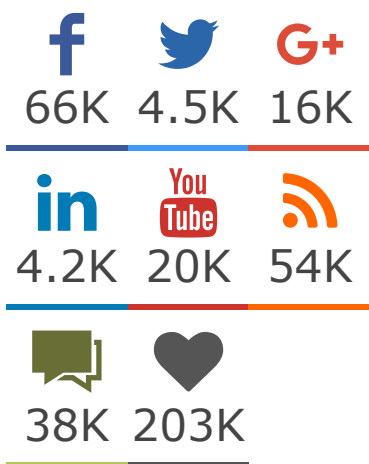
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Overview

Alpha and Beta Testing phases mainly focus on discovering the bugs from an already tested product and they give a clear picture of how the product is actually used by the real-time users. They also help in gaining experience with the product before its launch and the valuable feedback's are effectively implemented to increase the usability of the product.

Goals and methods of Alpha & Beta Testing do switch between themselves based on the process followed in the project and can be tweaked to be in-line with the processes.

Both these testing techniques have saved thousands of dollars to large-scale software releases for companies like Apple, Google, Microsoft etc.

What is Alpha Testing?

This is a form of internal acceptance testing performed mainly by the in-house software QA and testing teams. Alpha testing is the last testing done by the test teams at the development site after the acceptance testing and before releasing the software for beta test.

Alpha testing can also be done by the potential users or customers of the application. But still, this is a form of in-house acceptance testing.

Recommended read **=> What is Alpha Testing?**
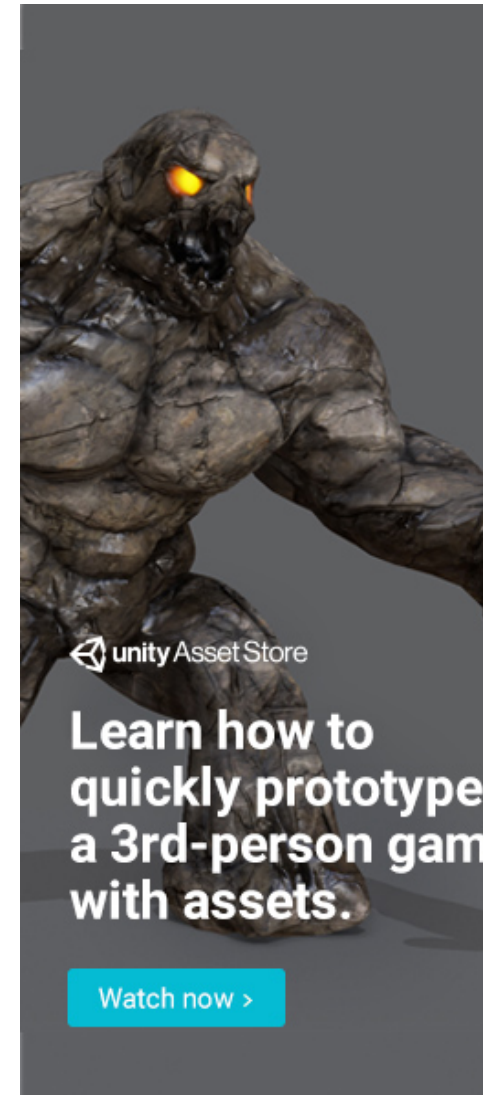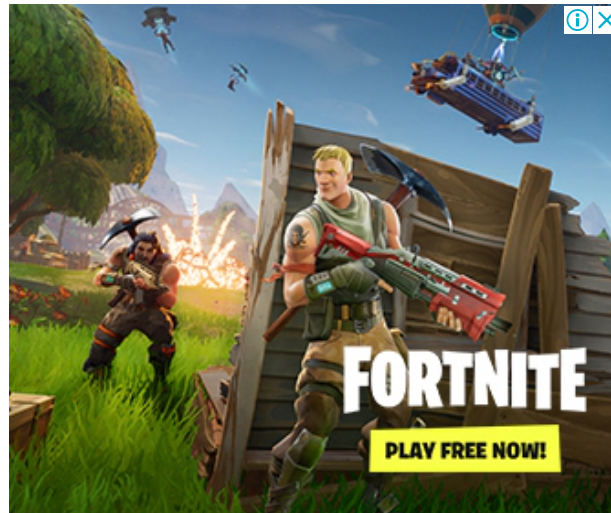
What is Beta Testing?

This is a testing stage followed by the internal full alpha test cycle. This is the final testing phase where the companies release the software to few external user groups outside the company test teams or employees. This initial software version is known as the beta version. Most companies gather user feedback in this release.

In short, beta testing can be defined as– the testing carried out by real users in a real environment.

Though companies do rigorous in-house quality assurance from dedicated test teams, it's practically impossible to test an application for each and every combination of the test environment. Beta releases make it easier to test the application on thousands of test machines and fix the issues before releasing the application to the public.

The selection of beta test groups can be done based on the company needs. The company can either invite few users to test the preview version of the application or they can release it openly to give it a try by any user. Fixing the issues in the beta release can significantly reduce the development cost as most of the minor glitches get fixed before the final release.

Until now many big companies have successfully used beta versions of their most anticipated applications. **_E.g._** Recently Microsoft corporation released Windows 10 beta and based on the feedback from thousands of users they managed to release a stable OS version. In the past, Apple also released OS X beta in public and fixed many minor issues and improved the OS based on the user feedback.

Recommended read => **What is Beta Testing?**

Alpha Vs Beta Testing

How Alpha and Beta testing are different from each other in various terms:

Alpha Testing	Beta Testing
Basic Understanding	
First phase of testing in Customer Validation	Second phase of testing in Customer Validation
Performed at developer's site - testing environment. Hence, the activities can be controlled	Performed in real environment, and hence activities cannot be controlled
Only functionality, usability are tested. Reliability and Security testing are not usually performed in-depth	Functionality, Usability, Reliability, Security testing are all given equal importance to be performed
White box and / or Black box testing techniques are involved	Only Black box testing techniques are involved
Build released for Alpha Testing is called Alpha Release	Build released for Beta Testing is called Beta Release

Alpha Testing	Beta Testing
System Testing is performed before Alpha Testing	Alpha Testing is performed before Beta Testing
Issues / Bugs are logged into the identified tool directly and are fixed by developer at high priority	Issues / Bugs are collected from real users in the form of suggestions / feedbacks and are considered as improvements for future releases.
Helps to identify the different views of product usage as different business streams are involved	Helps to understand the possible success rate of the product based on real user's feedback / suggestions.

Test Goals	
To evaluate the quality of the product	To evaluate customer satisfaction
To ensure Beta readiness	To ensure Release readiness (for Production launch)
Focus on finding bugs	Focus on collecting suggestions / feedback and evaluate them effectively
Does the product work?	Do customers like the product?

When	
Usually after System testing phase or when the product is 70% - 90% complete	Usually after Alpha Testing and product is 90% - 95% complete
Features are almost freezed and no scope for major enhancements	Features are freezed and no enhancements accepted

Alpha Testing	Beta Testing
Build should be stable for technical user	Build should be stable for real users

Test Duration

Alpha Testing	Beta Testing
Many test cycles conducted	Only 1 or 2 test cycles conducted
Each test cycle lasts for 1 - 2 weeks	Each test cycle lasts for 4 - 6 weeks
Duration also depends on the number of issues found and number of new features added	Test cycles may increase based on real user's feedback / suggestion

Stake Holders

Alpha Testing	Beta Testing
Engineers (in-house developers), Quality Assurance Team, and Product Management Team	Product Management, Quality Management, and User Experience teams

Participants

Alpha Testing	Beta Testing
Technical Experts, Specialized Testers with good domain knowledge (new or who were already part of System Testing phase), Subject Matter Expertise	End users to whom the product is designed
Customers and / or End Users can participate in Alpha Testing in some cases	Customers also usually participate in Beta Testing

Alpha Testing	Beta Testing
Expectations	
Acceptable number of bugs that were missed in earlier testing activities	Major completed product with very less amount of bugs and crashes
Incomplete features and documentation	Almost completed features and documentation
Entry Criteria	
• Alpha Tests designed and reviewed for Business requirements • Traceability matrix should be achieved for all the between alpha tests and requirements • Testing team with knowledge about the domain and product • Environment setup and build for execution • Tool set up should be ready for bug logging and test management System testing should be signed-off (ideally)	• Beta Tests like what to test and procedures documented for Product usage • No need of Traceability matrix • Identified end users and customer team up • End user environment setup • Tool set up should be ready to capture the feedback / suggestions • Alpha Testing should be signed off
Exit Criteria	

Alpha Testing	Beta Testing
• All the alpha tests should be executed and all the cycles should be completed • Critical / Major issues should be fixed and retested • Effective review of feedback provided by participants should be completed • Alpha Test Summary report • Alpha testing should be signed off	• All the cycles should be completed • Critical / Major issues should be fixed and retested • Effective review of feedback provided by participants should be completed • Beta Test summary report • Beta Testing should be signed off

Rewards

No specific rewards or prizes for participants	Participants are rewarded

Pros

Alpha Testing	Beta Testing
• Helps to uncover bugs that were not found during previous testing activities • Better view of product usage and reliability • Analyze possible risks during and after launch of the product • Helps to be prepared for future customer support • Helps to build customer faith on the product • Maintenance Cost reduction as the bugs are identified and fixed before Beta / Production launch • Easy Test Management	• Product testing is not controllable and user may test any available feature in any way - corner areas are well tested in this case • Helps to uncover bugs that were not found during previous testing activities (including alpha) • Better view of product usage, reliability, and security • Analyze the real user's perspective and opinion on the product • Feedback / suggestions from real users helps in improvising the product in future • Helps to increase customer satisfaction on the product

Cons

Alpha Testing	Beta Testing
• Not all the functionality of the product is expected to be tested • Only Business requirements are scoped	• Scope defined may or may not be followed by participants • Documentation is more and time consuming - required for using bug logging tool (if required), using tool to collect feedback / suggestion, test procedure (installation / uninstallation, user guides) • Not all the participants assure to give quality testing • Not all the feedback are effective - time taken to review feedback is high • Test Management is too difficult

What Next

Alpha Testing	Beta Testing
Beta Testing	Field Testing

Conclusion

Alpha and Beta testing are equally important in any company and both play a major role in the success of a product. I hope that this article would have enhanced your knowledge about the terms "Alpha Testing" and "Beta Testing" in an easily understandable manner.

Feel free to share your experience in performing Alpha & Beta Testing. Also, let us know if you have any queries about this article.

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36 comments ↓

#1 Jim Skyes
Thanks for the heads up Vijay.
I know Google+ beta testing platform. you can sign up for Google+
beta releases here
http://www.google.com/+/learnmore/platform-preview/

#2 Kirti S
I like the approach of adding beta testing experience in resume.
Though video game companies pay more it's difficult to get into.

#3 Tristan
Nice article, i again learned something.

#4 GV Sairam
Thanks vijay… learned something out of this article..

#5 Kanif
Hey Vijay nice to see you again with great stuff, thanks

#6 Vijay
@ Thanks Jim for one more resource for beta testers.
@ Kirti – agree. Getting into video game testing is bit difficult and
requires lot of patience
@ all- glad you liked the article.

#7 Arunadevi
Hi… Nice Article.. Got another view about the beta testing, which could
be help for the freshers.. Thanks… Looking for more articles…

#8 Simran
Hi Vijay,

Very nice article. Learned good things from this article.

Regards,
Simran

#9 Satish
Best article as usual from Vijay…
Addition of some beta test tool names should be more helpful…

#10 Anubha
A must read to understand both Alpha and beta testing

#11 Kajal Mehta
Windows 8 is now officially available and you can test the
preview/developer version by downloading it from:
http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-in/evalcenter/jj554510.aspx

#12 passbrains
Here's another platform to earn $$$ for apps testing:
http://www.passbrains,com

#13 anil kumar h
thanks vijay…for the wonderful article it is really working formula for
the freshers.

#14 Mohan
http://www.99tests.com
http://www.utest.com/

These are other crown source testing platforms, but testers should
really come up with good skills to make a mark here. Its too good for
freshers to test their testing skills.

#15 Afzal Jani MD
Thanks Vijay Its very much help full for me………may allah bless you….

#16 Darshil Shah
I have dine that quite a few times…!!!!!
But this article has helped me a lot…

Thanks Once Again Vijay..!!!

#17 Maqsood Syed
This site is really awesome !!!
Knowledge increase by sharing – Thanks to all

#18 moin
Thnaks….

#19 Shobhna
Hi Vijay,

Great article there…I need a little help as I am a training professional (Organisational Development)with 12 years of work experience, I developed a fancy for softare testing and got myself enrolled in an STQA programme with NIIT Ltd. in Lucknow, I want to understand if my trainig background would be helpful in any way in getting a good testing job. Thanks a lot

#20 lokesh
this notes is no any useful for anyone very bad…..
sorry

#21 harry
iloveditisintimagingerfanny

#22 joe holiday
im full of shit and im constipated

#23 ashly tyson
i am curly

#24 kdd
gta is rubbish

#25 ashley tyson
im a little pube head wank stain

#26 lovers
KDD AND AT FOREVER

#27 BAD ASS
LUCY BELL E1 BAD ASS

#28 ryan smith
im a meerkat

#29 jordan wright
i breed pigeons and suck dick

#30 chris green
i like to bum kangeroos

#31 shawn

I was wonder where I can get a good test job. I'm in college going for a major in computer programing then I want to get a bachelor's in game design and testing. If yall have any place that is good please email me at shawnkiee221@gmail.com

#32 vinod
can we get more and money by investing $250.

#33 Stephanie Barag
Thank you for the information.

#34 mahi
thanks vijay and jim and everyone who shares beta testing oportunities here:)

#35 Timothy
Just signed up with a VPN service and found their BETA program:
http://bit.ly/1IOJz2G

#36 aniket
Great article. this is nice site for increasing our testing knowledge. thanks for sharing testing information, it really helpful.

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