APPLAUSE

Beta Testing

Investigating the ins and outs of beta testing and why it's critical to delivering a great user experience.

Diving Into Beta Testing

Beta testing is one of the final steps in your [software development lifecycle](#) (SDLC) before a product goes live. Also referred to as user testing or customer validation, beta testing aims to ensure that end users are satisfied with a software product before you make it generally available (GA).

What Beta Tests Look For

While beta tests want to catch any software bugs and errors that have snuck through the testing process, it is more about understanding and improving the product's full end user experience before it becomes GA. That means thoroughly investigating the experience flow and understanding any pain points that will hinder enjoyment of the experience for your end user.

Keys to Successful Beta Tests

Remember, the goal of beta testing is to push the digital experience across the finish line – making sure everything works correctly for every possible user. Accordingly, it's good practice to cover as many use cases as possible on three levels of platform:

[Devices](#)

Operating systems

Browsers
A complete beta test requires testing your software on as many combinations of these platforms as possible. Some like to follow the 80/20 rule which states that 80% of the people only use 20% of the application features – meaning, if nothing else, to focus on the 20% that matters. This means adding as many real users to the mix as possible, all to test [in the wild](#).

This differs substantially from other forms of testing that are completed in a controlled lab setting, where you determine the devices, variables, and other metrics to focus on. In addition, you control the pace and the environment in which these tests are completed.

Executing beta testing in the wild provides the benefit of actual users testing your experience on actual devices. Things could come up here that you never planned for, and often are only discoverable in imperfect conditions that cannot be replicated in a lab setting. This emphasizes the need to test with as many users as many users as possible on as many combinations of devices, operating systems, and browsers.

Testing with a large number of users also helps avoid a situation that nobody likes – launching products with known issues. These issues may not seem like a big deal to the developers familiar with them, but to real end users, they can be a deal breaker. The only way to tell is through beta testing with users that have no preconceived notions of a product. Then you can really determine which issues are okay to launch with, and which must be fixed.
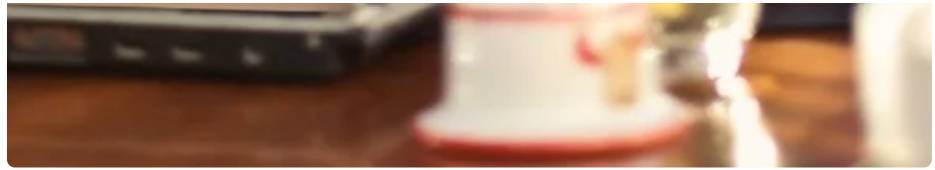
Overcoming Beta Testing Challenges

Of course, running thorough beta tests does involve its share of challenges.

First, how do you get enough users to test across your desired platforms? Let's be honest, this can be challenging, whether you do it in a lab or in the wild. Your user base can certainly help you get there, but it depends on how many you have and how diverse their platform choices are.

To gain access to a large user pool, many organizations now augment their beta tests with crowdtesting, among other methods. By making use of a solution that provides a broad user base, you can determine exactly how your beta tests are conducted – the number of users, platform combinations, and more – while maintaining the benefits of testing in the wild.

Another concern that invariably raises its head with expanded beta testing is added cost. There's no denying that adding layers of testing to your SDLC is an additional expense, but beta testing helps you avoid the cost of repairs later in the SDLC, or worse, in production.

Your product should be beta tested one way or another: either in a controlled manner by your company, or when you GA the product and paying customers report real problems. Of course, paying customers that discover bugs are very likely to never use a product again, so a thorough beta testing period isn't just good business practice, it could be the difference between losing customers and a wildly successful launch.

"Discovering the unexpected is more important than confirming the known."

George Box

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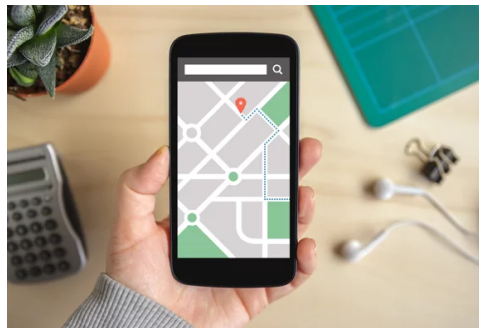
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