

Criticism and Communication

Prepared and presented by

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- Criticism
 - what is it? different types of criticism
 - responding to being criticised
 - how to criticise effectively
- Communication
 - ways of communicating
 - push and pull style
 - Virginia Satir's communication interaction model

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What do testers do?

- testers' work:
 - investigate, check, assess, find bugs
- applied to:
 - other people's work output
- we are critics
 - we *criticize* other people's work, or
 - we are *critical* of what we see others produce*

What is criticism?

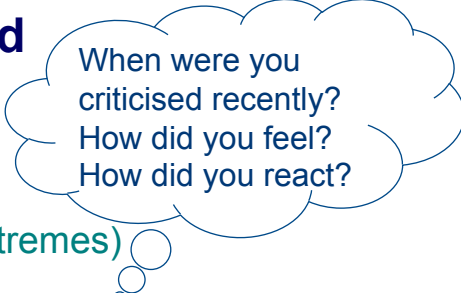
- from the Greek "krites" - judge
- Wikipedia definitions
 - examination, analysis, interpretation, judgement of something
 - positive or negative
 - *disapproval* expressed by pointing out faults / shortcomings
 - negative
 - a spoken or written *attack* on somebody / something
 - negative

Three types of criticism

- valid criticism
 - true or an element of truth
- unjustified / invalid criticism
 - we don't live up to someone else's expectations or fantasy
- vague criticism
 - difference of opinion
 - says more about the critic

When we are criticized

- awareness
- response
 - natural reactions (two extremes)
 - counter-attack / defensive
 - passive / accepting
 - better reaction: assess the criticism
 - different reaction to valid vs invalid criticism
 - use assertive techniques to respond
- action



When were you criticised recently?
How did you feel?
How did you react?

Assertive responses to criticism

- fogging

“I don't see how the testing can possibly take this long”

- acknowledge there may be some truth in it
- deflects the criticism
- not “yes, but”!
- listening / reflecting technique

“That's right, you don't see how the testing can possibly take this long”

- admitting the truth

- if the criticism is valid

- requesting specific feedback

- leads into action

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Advice for receiving criticism

DO

- realise they could be right (you may not be perfect)
- put it into perspective
- discuss openly
- work through an action plan to fix the problem
- get feedback on the action plan

DON'T

- ignore it
- assume they are wrong
- get angry or retaliate
- argue about it or get defensive
- be anxious

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Giving criticism / bug report

When did you criticise recently?
How did it go? Get a good reaction?

- “DASR script”
 - Describe (the specific behavior)
 - “When this happens...” / “when this is input”
 - Acknowledge (the effect)
 - “I feel ...” / “the system does this”
 - Specify (different behavior)
 - “What I would prefer is ...” / “it should do”
 - Reaffirm (their worth / ability to correct it)
 - “We/you will improve” / “this is good overall”
- realistic mutual goals & expectations

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Advice for giving criticism

DO

- gather all the facts
- be open to their view (you could be wrong)
- want the person to succeed (in their best interests)
- be specific
- work through an action plan to fix the problem

DON'T

- get angry
- use sarcasm or jokes
- want the person to feel bad
- be vague
- walk away after criticising

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Ways of communicating

- have you heard of the “7%” rule?
 - words = 7%
 - tone of voice = 38%
 - body language = 55%
- communication is not one-way: you can't communicate with people if they won't let you

Push Style

Rationale behind “Push Style”

- people influenced by convincing proposals
- key to success is quality of information given
- defend your proposal as it is the only proposal
- very little common ground

“Push Style” can be effective under the following:

- immaturity or dependency
- no threat in accepting the proposal
- high degree of trust
- recognition of expertise

Pull Style – is harder to do

Rationale behind “Pull Style”

- people influenced by uncovering needs
- key to success is quality of questions asked
- seek common ground
- building on ideas & proposals
- building relationships

“Pull Style” can be effective under the following:

- strong opinions
- threat in accepting proposal
- uncertainty (play safe)
- relationship is new or mistrust
- push style has failed
- influence needs longer lasting effect

Examples of push and pull

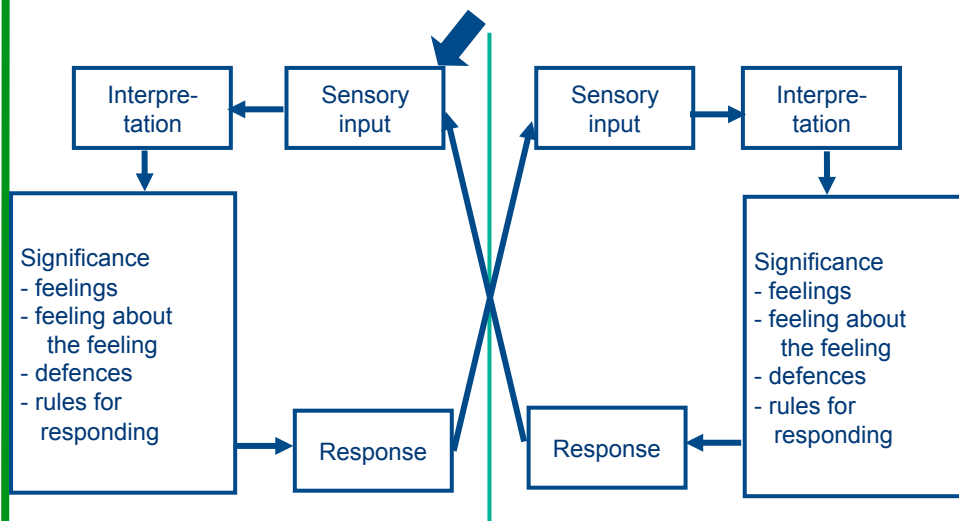
- push

- my detailed estimate: three weeks for testing
- we need another two testers for this project
- perform the tests in this order
- we need the following for the test environment
- facts / “I know best”

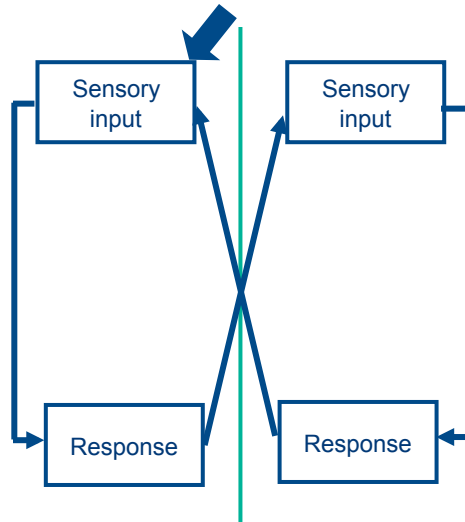
- pull

- what are the risks if we don't test thoroughly?
- how important **is** that deadline / constraints?
- what are the most important tests to do 1st?
- what would happen if our test environment didn't catch this type of bug? is that ok?
- risks / success criteria, common ground

Communication interaction model



Visible communication interaction model

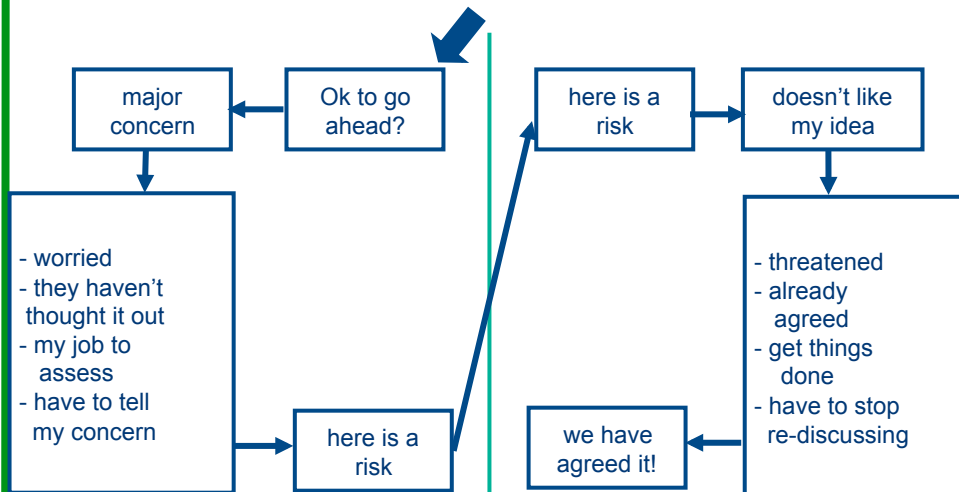


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Source: Virginia Satir, Johanna Rothman, Esther Derby (AYE conference)

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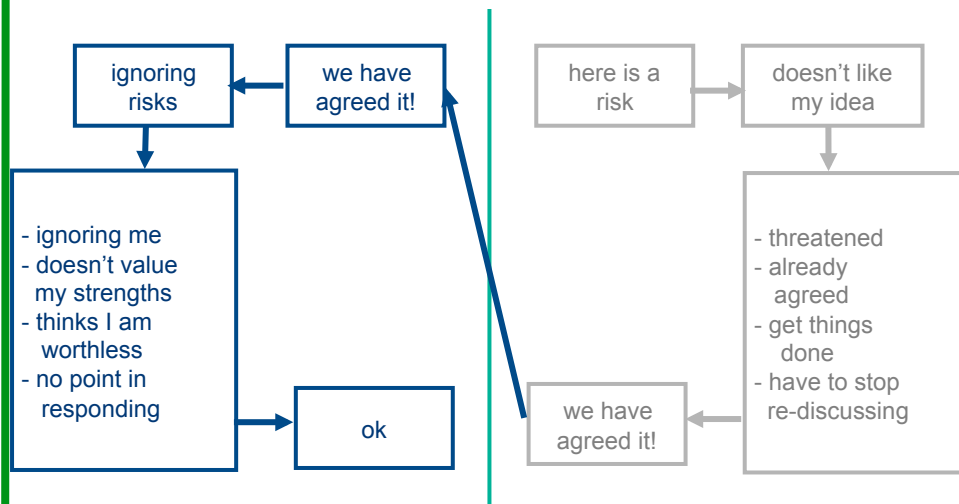
Communication interaction example - 1



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Communication interaction example - 2



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Summary

- Criticism
 - different types of criticism: valid, invalid, vague
 - responding to being criticised, e.g. fogging
 - how to criticise effectively, e.g. DASR, bug reports
- Communication
 - ways of communicating: words, voice, body
 - push and pull style
 - Virginia Satir's communication interaction model

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References

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