

# te testing experience

The Magazine for Professional Testers



## Security Testing



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## Interview Mike Smith

### - Testing Experience and the new 'Learntesting' online training service

An interview with Mike Smith, CEO of Testing Solutions Group (TSG)

In April, Testing Experience introduced a new concept in online learning by partnering with TSG to bring 'Learntesting' to the global market.

Jose Diaz interviews Mike Smith, CEO of TSG to find out how Learntesting is breaking new ground in the field of virtual learning for the testing community:

#### 1. What is the new 'Learntesting' all about?

The first thing to say is that Learntesting itself is not new; it has been around for over 5 years providing online ISTQB Certified Tester Foundation Level training, fully accredited by ISEB! However, we have now used the experience of two previous implementations to transform the technology and business model into a completely new global service. As well as providing a range of online content to help testers achieve certification, the new Learntesting service provides ongoing support via its approach to Virtual Learning.

#### 2. What do you mean by Virtual Learning?

There are many different terms used in this field, including distance learning, CBT (Computer Based Training), Virtual Education, Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) and Learning Management Systems (LMS). With Learntesting, we have built our own standards-based Virtual Learning Environment utilising an 'industrial-strength' LMS to support the current and ongoing needs of anyone interested in software testing. This environment provides:

- High-quality course content presented in a variety of formats to cater for different learning styles, including:
  - Tutor videos;

- Automated slide presentations;
- Professional voice-overs;
- Course text pdf transcripts.
- Interactive quizzes and exercises with supporting voice-overs;
- Exam-style questions and answers with supporting explanations;
- Formal 'mock' exam assessments;
- Live Virtual Classes led by tutors to support higher-level learning objectives, course exercises and exam revision sessions;
- A communication centre, including:
  - email;
  - forums;
  - noticeboard.
- A private library of testing and testing-related ebooks;
- Administration and accredited tutor support from a growing 24x7 global network of accredited training providers;
- Self-registration system for students;
- Additional resources, including papers, presentations, templates for testers and sample exam questions;
- Provision of ISTQB Foundation Level exam vouchers redeemable at test centres throughout the world.

### 3. From your experience, what is important for successful online certification training?

There are many different ways that students can prepare for certificated exams. Study options range from simply reading the syllabus to sitting accredited courses, whether in the classroom or online. There are many books, sample questions and other support materials widely available at a range of costs.

From our experience, we use a term called ‘horses for courses’; that is, a student’s best option depends upon their previous experience, the level of certificate they are studying and their preferred learning style. Some experienced testers decide not to do any formal study, preferring to rely on their experience. Whilst this works for some, others actually have real problems because their experience may be too narrow, or they have used a proprietary approach to testing not in line with the ISTQB.

Even with a prime objective of just passing the exam, not taking any study can be a false economy with expensive exam re-sits. Additionally, most large organisations that buy into the concept of certification are also buying into the concept of learning and development – not just proving that someone can pass a test on a given day.

With the above in mind, when providing online learning it is important to cater for a range of backgrounds. The most inexperienced students will need a lot of material available and ways of reinforcing the knowledge that they are acquiring. The more experienced students need ways of assessing their knowledge levels and easy access to the areas of learning in which they are weakest.

For all learners, it is important that the course provides an interesting learning experience. This is the most difficult challenge to anyone trying to build online training solutions. Although there is an increasing range of ‘rapid authoring’ tools available, it requires expert subject matter knowledge, online content design skills, a lot of time and a large budget to build successful online training materials.

Interactive quizzes and exam assessments are critical and in many respects, the most important feature for the success of online training. This involves a huge amount of development work, since setting good exam questions is hard enough – and providing the supporting information as to why each answer option is correct or not is an even bigger challenge!

With Learntesting, we have chosen to get our courses leading to certification accredited. This means we cannot take short cuts and need to cover all aspects of the syllabus as well as ensuring the online learning experience is good. Students of Learntesting are buying a guarantee that our courses properly prepare them for the exam. Individuals and organisations will soon be unhappy if the training fails to deliver this, and our pass rate at Foundation level of over 95% in the past 5 years is testament to the quality of the learning experience.

### 4. What sets Learntesting apart from other self-study training options?

With the growing demand for self-study options, it is becoming increasingly important to provide an environment that not only leads to the best chance of success in exams for students but also supports them in their career development and future certification needs. By investing in both high-quality online training and a virtual learning environment, Learntesting can deliver on both of these key objectives **and** provide a rewarding and enjoyable learning experience along the way.

In addition, the vast majority of self-study options aimed at the ISTQB Certified Tester scheme are not accredited by a recognised body. Learntesting has chosen to invest in providing accredited certification courses, so individuals and organisations can be sure that the learning experience is high-quality as well as providing in-depth coverage of the complete syllabus.

By creating its own virtual learning environment, Learntesting does not just offer online courses which are available to run on a one-off basis within a simple hosted environment. It goes much further by providing a number of value-adds that are appreciated by business and individual alike and which serve as key differentiators. All students registering

with Learntesting courses are provided with their own unique ‘seat’ in the LMS and access to a range of resources. Learntesting course students are provided with 1-year renewable access to a unique service that includes:

1. A private library of ebooks, some of which are written specifically to support the ISTQB Certified Tester scheme;
2. A professional tutor-video from its accredited ISTQB Certified Tester Foundation Level (CTFL) course recording, with one of the most experienced testing consultants in the world – ideal to act as a ‘refresher’ of knowledge and as preparation for those going on to the Advanced courses;
3. A 24x7 support forum from a global network of accredited training providers;
4. A growing private library of presentations, papers and other testing-related content;
5. An annual subscription to Testing Experience Magazine.

Also, by introducing Live Virtual Classroom Tutor-led sessions to support Advanced courses and exam revision sessions, plus exam vouchers redeemable across the world, Learntesting is providing an ‘end-to-end’ service to its students and a truly global solution for a global industry.

### 5. What courses and options are available in Learntesting?

#### *Foundation Level*

The new Learntesting service has been launched with its fully accredited ISTQB Certified Tester Foundation Level (CTFL) course available in several ‘packages’:

- Course only;
- Course plus exam voucher;
- Course plus revision plus exam voucher.

In addition, Learntesting offers a virtual classroom revision session for CTFL which is available as a separate package with the exam voucher.

The CTFL course has now been released in English and German and is under development in Spanish (using the Spanish Testing Board as its accreditation body).

Learntesting also has a Foundation ‘tutor-video’ only option, which is ideal for those who already hold the CTFL Certificate as a refresher and preparation for moving on to Advanced Level.

#### *Advanced Level*

At Advanced Level, a course leading to the Test Manager Certificate is being finalised and will be submitted for accreditation with an expectation of this being complete by August. This is a major exercise since we believe that typical self-study options for such a long and demanding syllabus will not lead to success for most students.

As such, the Advanced Level online courses being developed by Learntesting will have the following structure:

- Full Course video;
- Two 3-hour Live Virtual Classroom sessions each accompanied by two experienced accredited tutors;
- Virtual Classroom exam revision session.

The courses will be supported by:

- Exercise course workbook;
- Interactive exercises and quizzes;
- Formal ‘mock’ exam assessments;
- 24x7 accredited tutor support;
- Advanced Level ebook access within the Learntesting ebook library.

## Other Content

There is a range of other content currently available with much more under development (see below).

- Full 'mock' ISTQB examination assessments;
- Introductory course on Non-Functional Testing;
- Transition course (for those who studied the pre-2005 ISTQB Syllabus);
- Templates for testers;
- Various papers and presentations;
- Sample questions and answers.

### 6. You mention an exam voucher. What are my options for exams if I study with Learntesting?

Learntesting is working in conjunction with a number of exam bodies to provide flexible options for exams. These include Pearson VUE, who have exam centres across the world and iSQL, who operate in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, France, Russia, Ukraine and more than 30 other countries all over the world.

In addition, many ISTQB Boards run a public exam schedule and private/closed exams can be arranged for groups of students who study accredited courses.

### 7. What are the development plans for Learntesting?

Learntesting will be developing further language options for its ISTQB CTFL course over and above English & German (already available) and Spanish (under development). We would be pleased to hear from anyone requesting a language other than those (contact [info@learntesting.com](mailto:info@learntesting.com)).

As well as the Advanced Level Test Manager course currently being completed, an Advanced Level Test Analyst course is also under construction for release later this year. A course is also under development for the Intermediate Certificate in the ISEB scheme, which we believe to be complementary to the ISTQB Certified Tester scheme. We are also looking to provide support for other related schemes such as IREB (Re-

quirements Engineering) and QAMP (Quality Assurance Management Professional).

In addition, some smaller modules of training that support specific areas, such as Agile Development, Non-functional Testing and TSG's 'Practical Test Academies' that are run in the classroom are in the pipeline for development.

### 8. How do I get access to Learntesting and what do I get if I register as a client for free?

You can access Learntesting via the Testing Experience Portal [www.testingexperience.learntesting.com](http://www.testingexperience.learntesting.com)

You will see the content available in the Catalogue, a regular 'Opinion Piece' written by a range of authors, sample course material, questions & answers, and some free downloadable content.

If you register as a client in Learntesting, you will also be given free access for 3 months to a range of other content before signing up for any courses, including:

- Exam hints and tips;
- Papers and Presentations;
- Templates for Testers;
- Sample exam questions and answers, updated on a regular basis;
- Archive of weekly opinion pieces.

As a special bonus, Testing Experience is offering a limited number of pre-pay places on the Advanced Level Test Manager course (prior to formal accreditation) at a very special price of €450 (plus VAT). You will get immediate access to the CTFL Tutor-video and a private library of ebooks which will help you prepare for the Advanced Level course starting in August.

These places are only available by registering as a client on Learntesting and are strictly limited to the number of places in the initial virtual classroom sessions.



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