

Abs nce – much ado about nothing



HOUSE OF TEST

CONSULTING & OUTSOURCING

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Nothing is “something”

- It's just abstract. A construct. Like:
 - ◆ A Pair
 - ◆ A card hand
 - ◆ A design
 - ◆ Difference
 - ◆ Access

“Named” nothings

- Tunnels
- Entrances, doors openings.
- Canyons
- Holes in rings, nuts, nooses, etc

“Absence”

- Uncountable things are not here, e g:
 - ◆ A dozen swans
 - ◆ A rhino
 - ◆ A Christmas tree
- Why don't we notice and think about all those?

Expectations

- Only expected things are “missing”.
- Expectations vary depending on your mental model of the context and experience. Imagine:
 - ◆ One single shoe.
 - ◆ An empty picture frame hung on a wall.
 - ◆ A poker hand with 9, 10, Jack and Queen of hearts, and a 4 of spades.
 - ◆ A muffin with bite taken out of it.
 - ◆ A fire extinguisher holder.

Absent answers and test results

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- You get an “empty” result.
- You get a response which doesn't answer your question directly (in the way you expected.)

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- You get a response which doesn't answer your question directly (in the way you expected.)
 - ◆ “Did you like Lars 40-minute presentation?”
 - ◆ “I left after 2 minutes.”

“Well that didn't give anything!”

(- or did it?)

- Expand your interpretation to a larger model.
- Your attempt to find out what you wanted certainly failed, and failures are learning opportunities.
- Your simplification of the communication was not ok.

“Nonsense answers”

"911, where is your emergency?"

"123 Main St."

"Ok, what's going on there?"

"I'd like to order a pizza for delivery."

"Ma'am, you've reached 911"

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"Ummm.... I'm sorry, you know you've called 911 right?"

"Yeah, do you know how long it will be?"

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"Ok, Ma'am, is everything ok over there? do you have an emergency?"

"Yes, I do."

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"Ok, Ma'am, is everything ok over there? do you have an emergency?" [Mix: no and yes]

"Yes, I do." [She answers one question and clarifies “do” as opposed to “is”]

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"Ok, Ma'am, is everything ok over there? do you have an emergency?" [Mix: no and yes]

"Yes, I do." [She answers one question and clarifies “do” as opposed to “is”]

"..And you can't talk about it because there's someone in the room with you?"

"Yes, that's correct. Do you know how long it will be?" [Now you've got it!]

“Unexpected” answers

Some answers are possible by themselves, but:

- don't make sense in your model.
- don't fit with your experience.

Should you always phrase “better” questions?

Example: propaganda

Q: How many voted for the ruling party in [pick any dictatorship] ?

A: 99.7%, according to their state department.

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Interpretation: Blatant lie, we can't learn anything from asking them directly.

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A: 99.7%, according to their state department.

Q: What can we learn from this?

- ◆ Why the whole routine?
- ◆ Do they think anybody believes it?
- ◆ Is it a psychological trick to make them “chose it themselves” and rather believe it than be enslaved?

Let's try that in a dev situation...

- Q: "When should we fix that bug?"
- A: "It has a gtkrs rating of 6."
 - ◆ Interpretation: "I have no clue what that means and I don't learn anything. I have ask clearly for a time."

Let's try that in a dev situation...

- Q: "When should we fix that bug?"
- A: "It has a gtkrs rating of 6."
 - ◆ There is something called a gtkrs rating.
 - ◆ It can be 6, probably 1-6, maybe 0, maybe >6
 - ◆ The answerer thinks this information makes is quite clear whether it's urgent.
 - ◆ The answerer doesn't know I'm unfamiliar with gtkrs, or intentionally withholds info.

Error analysis, model expansion

- Asking one question to get an answer:
 - ◆ Do they understand what you want and why?
 - ◆ Can the responder answer at all?
 - ◆ Can they answer correctly?
 - ◆ Do they want to give you that information?
 - ◆ Do I understand what to ask for?
- Relate this to test cases...

“Error analysis”

- If it's a test or a “device” that should tell you something, like a fire alarm:
 - ◆ Is it on? [blink]
 - ◆ Is it able to tell you the information?[beeper]
 - ◆ Is it deciding correctly? [burning food at least]
 - ◆ Low Batt: warning during some time
 - ◆ But what if discharge is sudden? Li-curve

Neat answers! (that don't fit your model)

- The hardest absence to notice!
- You have answers, and they look ok.
- The “gap” will only exist in an abstract model

Finding gaps

Your model is your guiding light.

- Beta decay conflicted with one of Newton's laws

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- Beta decay conflicted with one of Newton's laws
 - ◆ Proposition and discovery of neutrinos.
- Mass distribution of galaxies
 - ◆ Proposition of “dark matter”.

“Jokes to remember gaps”

- There are two kinds of people in the world - those that can extrapolate information from incomplete data...

“Jokes to remember gaps”

- All syllogisms have three parts.
- Hence, this isn't a syllogism.

Emotions as triggers:

- Confusion.
- Mixed confusion in a group.
- Disappointment or frustration
- Peace and quiet. A little TOO quiet. “Neat & tidy”

What I hope you take with you:

- React to feelings of confusion, surprise and frustration. Don't skip results and just move on.
- When you get unexpected answers, expand your model of the communication and the problem. There's always stuff in the darkness, in the cracks of your model, in the framing of both Q&A.
- Keep mapping your models for gaps.
- We still need human testers to interpret results.

Homework assignment

- 3 prisoners
- They sit in a row face-to-neck, facing the same direction.
- They can only see the hat(s) in front of them. (The person in the middle is short.)
- 3 blue hats, 2 red hats
- “State your own hat's color!”

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- They sit in a row face-to-neck, facing same direction.
- They can only see the hat(s) in front of them. (The person in the middle is short.)
- Out of a pool of 3 blue hats + 2 red hats, they each get one of unknown color.
- “State your own hat's color!”
- After 15 minutes of silence, the prisoner in front answers correctly.
- (Please don't tweet answers, but explain one-on-one)

Thank you for your time!

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