**STLC can be roughly divided into 3 parts:**

1. Test planning
2. Test Design
3. Test Execution

In the previous article we have seen that in a practical QA project, we started with the SRS review and Test scenario writing – which is actually the step 2 in the STLC process – the test design, which involves details on what to test and how to test. Why haven’t we started with the Test planning?

Test planning indeed is the first and foremost activity that happens in a testing project.

**How test planning takes place at each phase of the SDLC:**

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| **SDLC Phase** | **Test planning activity** |
| **Initiate** | Ideally QA team should get involved while the scope of the project is gathered from the customer/client in the form of business requirements. But in the real world, that is not the case. From a practical point of view, the involvement of the QA team is NIL. At the end of this phase, BRD is finalized and a basic Project Plan is created. |
| **Define** | SRS is created from the BRD. Test plan's initial draft is created. At this point, since the QA team is not done with the SRS review, the scope of testing is not clear. So the TP at this phase will only contain information on when testing is going to happen, project information and the team information (if we have it). |
| **Design** | The SRS review is carried out and the scope of testing is identified. We have much more information on what to test and a good estimate of how many test cases we might get etc. A second version of the Test plan is created incorporating all this information. |

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From the above table it is clear that test plan is not a document that you can create all at once and use it from then on.

**Test Plan is a dynamic document**. The success of a testing project depends on a well written test plan document that is current at all times. Test Plan is more or less like **a blue print of how the testing activity is going** to take place in a project.

**It has clear information on the following aspects:**

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| **Items in a Test Plan Template** | **What do they contain** |
| **Scope =>** | Test scenarios/Test objectives that will be validated. |
| **Out of scope =>** | Enhanced clarity on what we are not going to cover. |
| **Assumptions =>** | All the conditions that need to hold true for us to be able to proceed successfully |
| **Schedules =>** | Test documentation- test cases/test data/setting up environmentTest executionTest cycle- how many cycleStart and end date for cycles |
| **Roles and Responsibilities =>** | Team members are listedWho is to do whatmodule owners are listed and their contact info |
| **Deliverables =>** | What documents(test artifacts) are going to produce at what time frames |
| **Environment =>** | What kind of environment requirements existWho is going to be in chargeWhat to do in case of problems |
| **Tools =>** | For example: JIRA for bug trackingLoginHow to use JIRA |
| **Defect Management =>** | Who are we going to report the defects toHow are we going to reportWhat is expected- do we provide screenshot? |
| **Risks and Risk Management =>** | Risks are listedRisks are analyzed- likelihood and impact is documentedRisk mitigation plans are drawn |
| **Exit criteria =>** | When to stop testing |

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Since, all the above information is the most critical for the day-to-day working of a QA project, it is important to keep the Test Plan document updated at all times.

**Here are a few important pointers regarding a test plan:**

1. Test Plan is a document that is the point of reference based on which testing is carried out within the QA team.
2. It is also a document we share with the Business Analysts, Project Managers, Dev team and the other teams. This is to enhance the level of transparency into the QA team’s working to the external teams.
3. It is documented by the QA manager/QA lead based on the inputs from the QA team members.
4. Test Planning is typically allocated 1/3rd of the time it takes for the entire QA engagement.  The other 1/3rd is for Test Designing and rest is for Test Execution.
5. Test plan is not static and is updated on an on demand basis.
6. The more detailed and comprehensive the Test plan, the more successful the testing activity.