Quality as a Team Sport

What shifting left really means for engineers and testers



Tim Clark

BCS SiGST | 6 November 2026

Who Am I?

- Early Careers Advocate
- Software Engineer in finance
- IT Now Columnist



Who owns quality?

The tester?

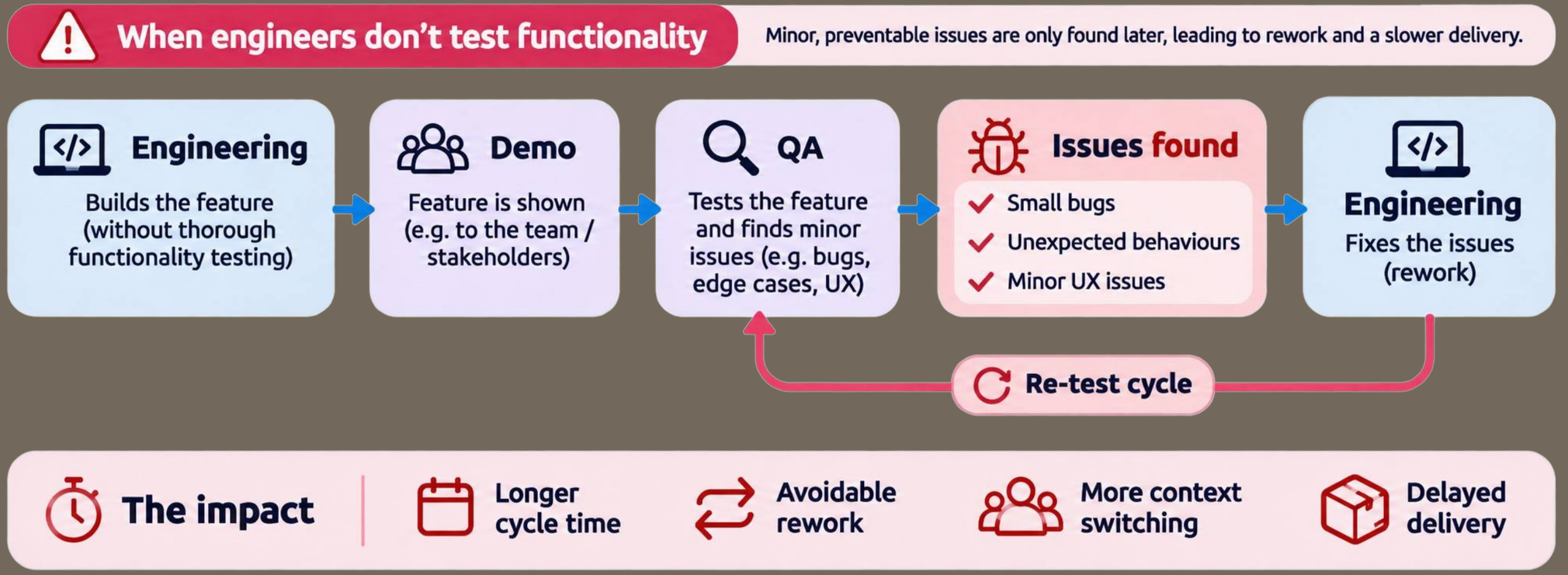
The developer?

The team.



No more "almost there"

Tim Clark



Testing delayed, testing denied

Engineers test functionality, Testers test feeling

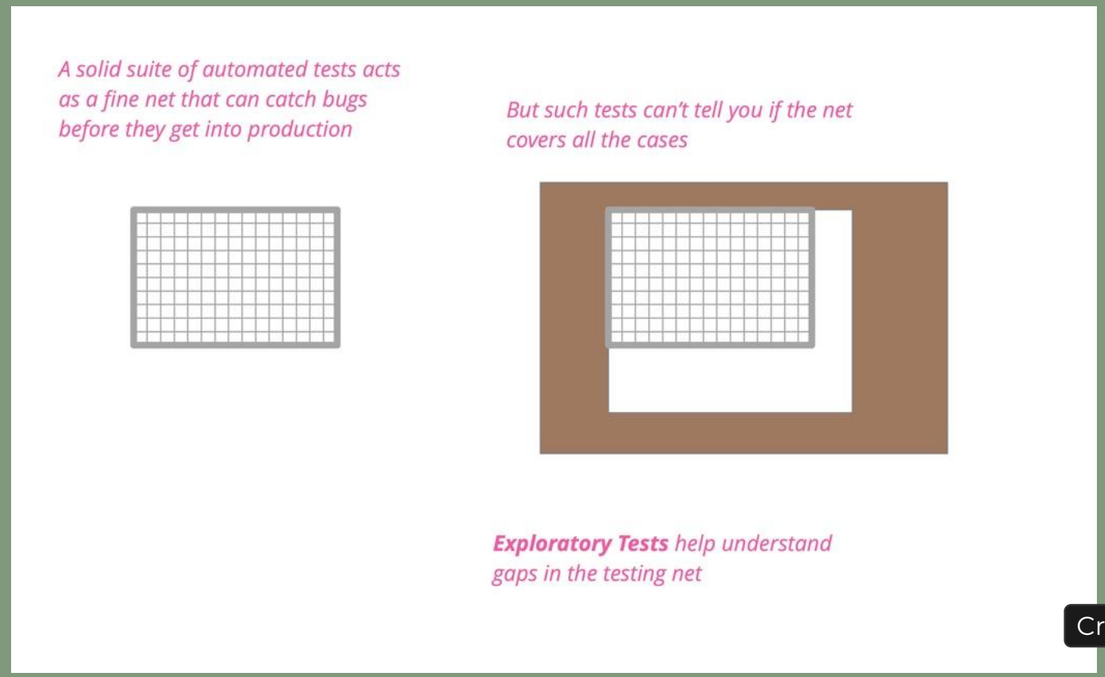
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What will testers be doing?

Ensure quality is a focus throughout

Quality starts before the first line of code.



Credit: Martin Fowler/Elisabeth Hendrickson

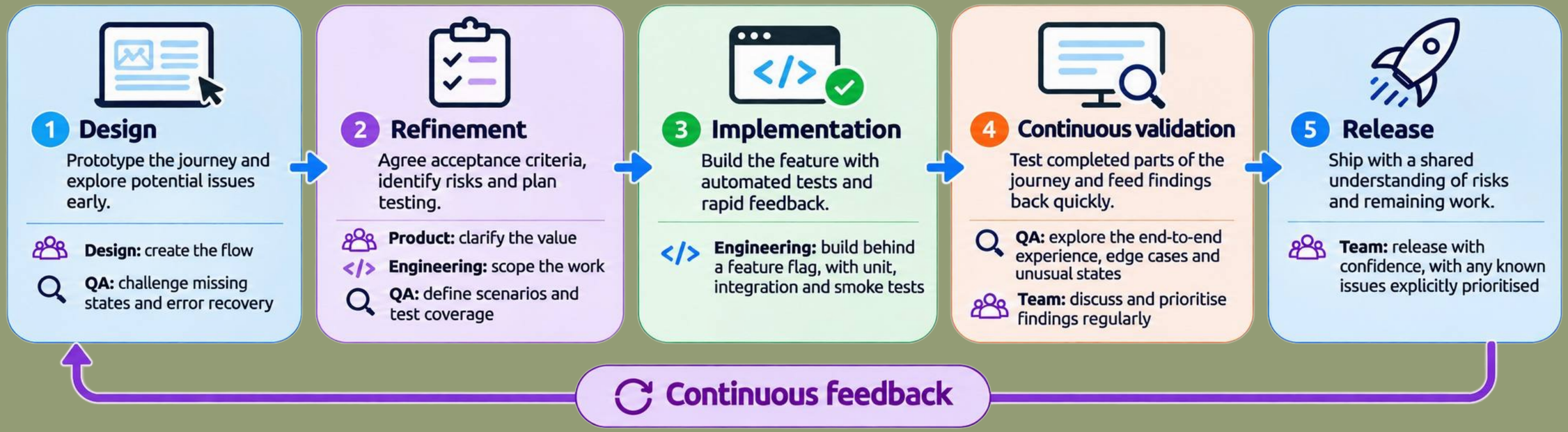
Exploratory testing: What's outside your net?

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Continuous, fast, useful feedback

Specialist expertise is **amplified**, not replaced.


1 Design
Prototype the journey and explore potential issues early.
Design: create the flow
QA: challenge missing states and error recovery
2 Refinement
Agree acceptance criteria, identify risks and plan testing.
Product: clarify the value
Engineering: scope the work
QA: define scenarios and test coverage
3 Implementation
Build the feature with automated tests and rapid feedback.
Engineering: build behind a feature flag, with unit, integration and smoke tests
4 Continuous validation
Test completed parts of the journey and feed findings back quickly.
QA: explore the end-to-end experience, edge cases and unusual states
Team: discuss and prioritise findings regularly
5 Release
Ship with a shared understanding of risks and remaining work.
Team: release with confidence, with any known issues explicitly prioritised
Continuous feedback

Example

Shift left has limits

Culture beats tooling

Nicer tests can't help teams that don't talk.

3 things to try

1. Get involved before implementation
2. Help engineers build better safety nets
3. Share the quality mindset



Quality is a Team Sport

Shift left isn't about who "owns" testing.

It's about building confidence in code, together.

Tim Clark

Questions?

linkedin.com/in/tdhc

