

## Testers are from Mars, Developers are from Venus

I have led software teams that were backed by an independent software testing team. I always found a natural friction between the testers and developers. Even when they were friends outside the door, professionally they seemed to be from different planets. In the triage meetings, they would sit on the opposite sides of the table, till I would redistribute to reduce the tension in the air. Testers would say bug and developers would reply, 'as designed'.

This article is inspired by the book Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus. However, please do not read any gender related meaning into the title. It is just to illustrate how in spite of being from different planets, developers and testers need to work together to finally create software. They are different and yet part of the whole that makes software work.

### DEVELOPERS ARE FROM VENUS

In Roman mythology, Venus is the Goddess of love. Developers are "creators". They write code and the code becomes 'alive' when it executes. This act of creation makes them fall in 'love' with their creation. It is difficult for anyone to find faults with their creation. Some developers, like Pygmalion, are totally smitten by what they have created.

### TESTERS ARE FROM MARS

In Roman mythology, Mars is the warrior God. Testers like to 'destroy' things. They like to 'break' the product to find defects. They take the customer's side (an outsider) instead of siding with the developers (an insider!). They are always coming up with suggestions on what can be done better. No wonder developers and testers seem to be on opposite sides. However, without independence, testers will not be able to do justice to their role.

### SO HOW DO WE GET ALONG?

Unlike a family where there is no arbiter, fortunately in software teams the project manager can balance the friction between Venus and Mars. Mind you, the friction is needed to ensure quality. Conflicts need not get out of hand. They can be a positive force to improve quality.



### About Chakkilam

Chakkilam Infotech is a 10 year old IT services company focused on software testing. We offer functional testing, test automation and performance testing services to software product companies and enterprise IT clients.

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**Sensitize:** Ask developers to review and unit test each other's code. Put them in the tester's shoes and sensitize them to the tester's role and how it can help. Similarly, ask testers to review each other's test cases and documents. Sensitize them to the feeling of having faults in their work pointed out.

**Tone:** The key is to make sure the tone of communication is right. When people find fault with your work, it is easy to get defensive. It is easy for the critic to be seen sitting in judgment of the person instead of commenting on the work product. As a project manager, ensure the tone is objective both in written bug reports and in meetings.

**Political Balance:** Testers in many software teams feel powerless. This comes from historical reasons where project managers seemed to take sides with the developer. While testers are responsible for quality, they do not feel empowered to stop the release. When you empower your testing teams, your product quality improves and establishes a good balance in your team. As a manager, it will mean you will need to step in more often to 'handle' situations between the development and testing teams, but you will sleep better knowing that in time they will respect each other and keep each other honest.

In conclusion, as a project manager you need to understand that it takes two different mind sets for the team to function as a whole. Development and Testing are like the Yin and Yang of software. Two opposing and complimentary forces that create great software.

### About the author:

Sriram Rajaram has spent the last 19 years in IT consulting, delivery management, project management and training management. He has led large software delivery teams of more than 300 people and has worked in both IT services and software product companies. He currently heads operations at Chakkilam Infotech.

