



All is Fair in Love and War

Testing in a Political Context

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Let's Test Oz

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Agenda

- **Why politics?**
- **We are Under Control**
- **Do you have Political Style?**
- **Machiavelli – he was not an evil person**
- **Why should we seek control?**
- **Stakeholder mapping**
- **Four Political Tactics for Testers**
- **Ethics – yes we need them**

About me

- **Living in Copenhagen, Denmark**
- **I have political aspirations**
 - Social politics – deep indignation
 - I influence people with power, e.g. by blogging
- **Work for the Danish Customs and Tax Administration**
 - Currently on Denmark's largest public IT project
 - It's obviously a very political context
- **Context driven tester – as much as context allows me to**

Why talk about politics?

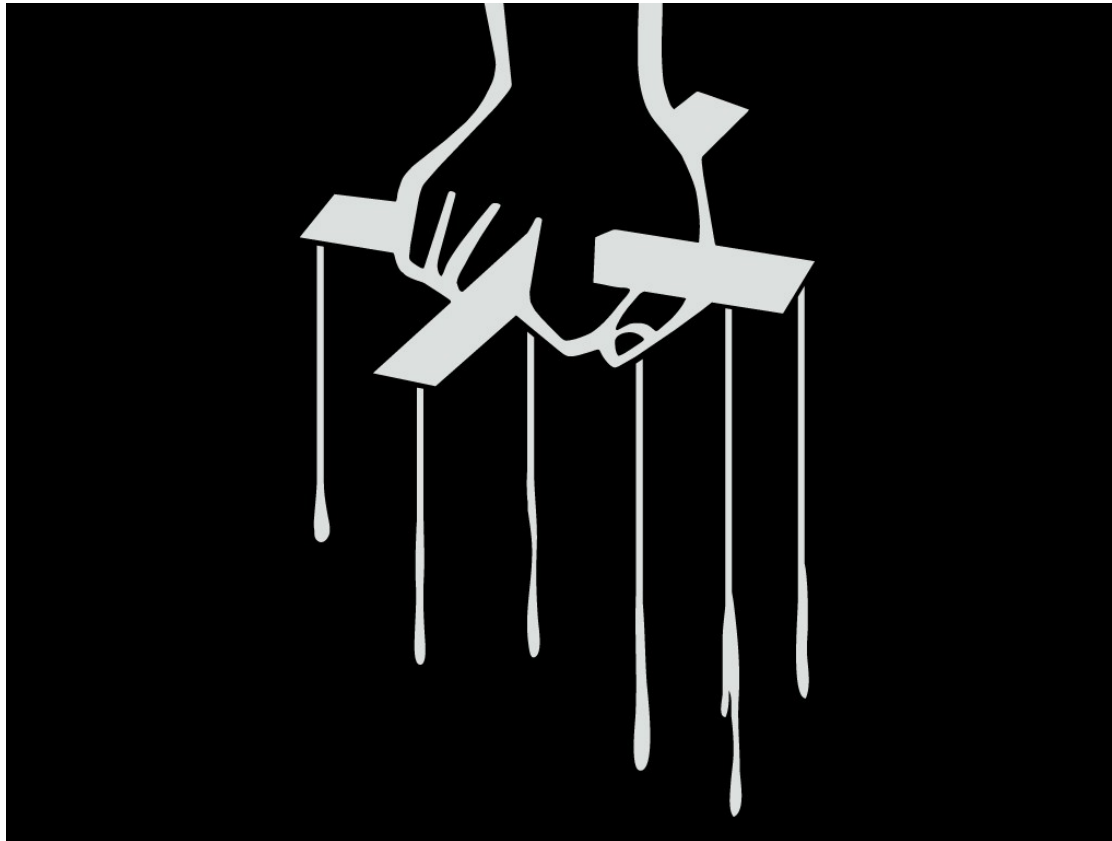
- I have observed that...
- Politics tend to lead to frustration with testers
- Testing can be a victim of random politics
- Can't we do anything?

It's a jungle out there

Ways to control testing:

- Ignore test results
- Restrict access to necessary information
- Restrict testers ability to communicate test results
- Commit testing on product quality AND deadlines
- Enforce non functional standards and processes
- Blame testers for doing their job
- Ask test to be a quality gate, but do not empower test to act on it

Political Control



Typical reactions to political control

I know some great testers who will react emotionally:

- "It's Bad Test Management!"

That's a valid perspective, so:

- That's just tactics to attempt to change things



Political style

Political style



PM David Cameron, PM Helle Thorning Schmidt, PRES Barack Obama
At the Nelson Mandela funeral

Political style



Richard Stallman – founder of Free Software Foundation

Political style



Less political	More political
Substance power	Position power
Focus on feedback and learning	Focus on image and perception
Do things right	Do what works
More open agendas	More private agenda
Meritocracy-based descisions	Relationship-based descisions
Results and ideas speak for themselves	Self-promotion

Brandon, Seldman: Survival of the Savvy



Exercise:

What kind of 'political animal' am I?

10 minutes to answer the questionnaire

Pair up and explain with your neighbor

Niccolo Machiavelli

- His book "Il Principe" from 1513 is a protreptic about warfare
- Before Machiavelli, nobody understood what was going on in Italy
- Everyone was seeing it from their own perspective
- He was a great thinker and explained it to his master
- I think he was killed by poisoning



Can Machiavelli teach us anything?

- Hating politics doesn't help
- We can learn from history
- Politics can be studied objectively
- There doesn't have to be a moral or ethical perspective when we study politics (there *can* be)
- There are politics going on whether we want it or not

Why should we seek control?

Humans come in the world with a passion for control

If people lose ability to control things, research shows that they become unhappy, helpless, hopeless and depressed.

Feeling 'in control' seems to be a necessary prerequisite for happiness

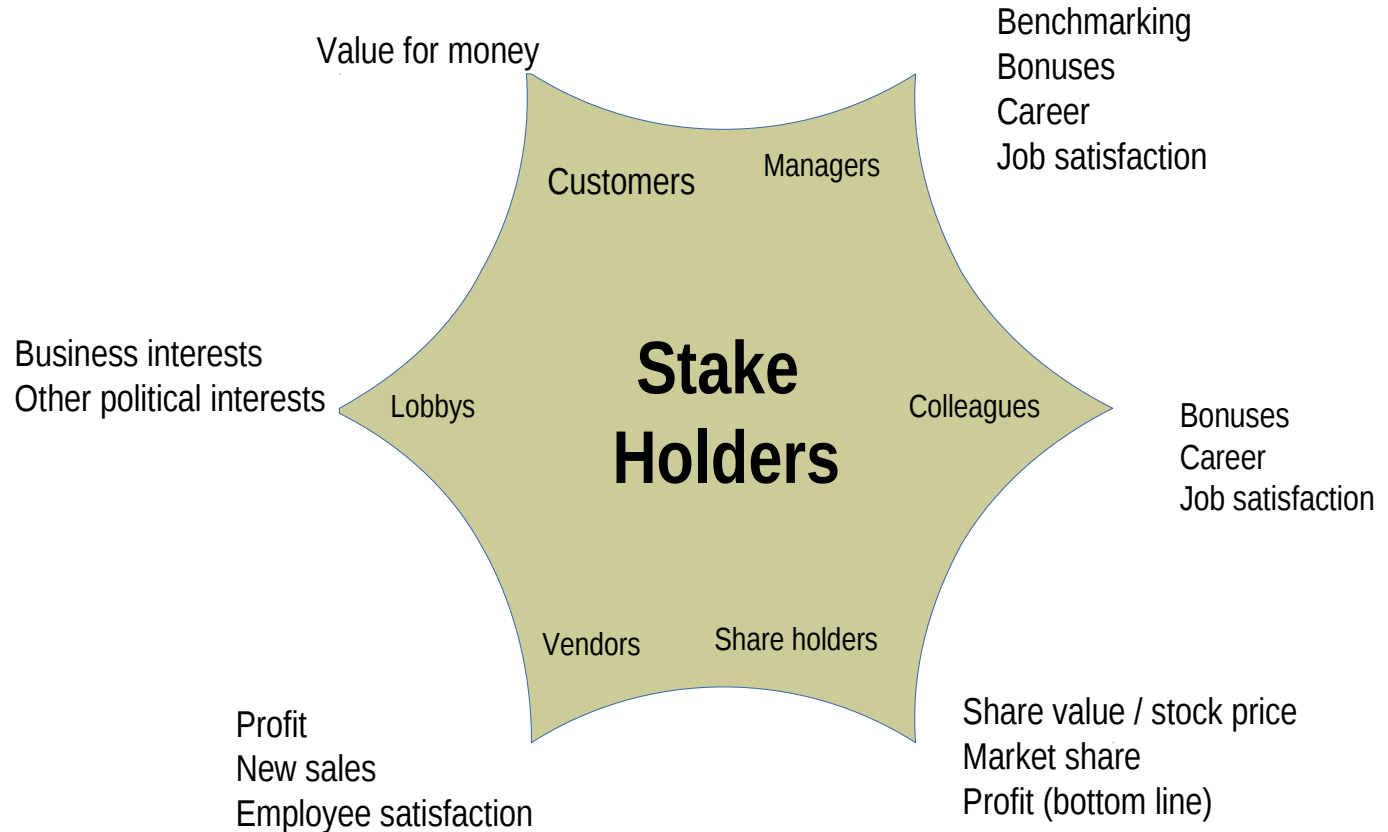
Freud was pretty clear:

- People strive after happiness;
- They want to become happy and remain so.

By acting politically, we can gain control

- Over ourselves
- Over our team

Know your stakeholders



(Where are the users?)



Build relations

Remember than in any organisation, there's a hidden 'informal' org map

- Beware of dynamics
- And who's

Decisions are often not following formal/documented procedures

Go outside your chain of command

Connect with people you feel comfortable with

- Testers often connect well with people your manager can't connect with
- But go after the 'power people too'

A bit of 'Divide and Conquer' can work great

- Proceed with caution



Ask questions

We're trained software 'investigators'

- Testers ask questions for a living

Questions can set things in motion

- When asked to the right stake holder
- At the right time
- (Balanced political style)

When questioning, appreciation is fundamental

- Reflect what's being said
- So people know you're listening

Avoid saying "but"!

Examples:

- "Could the testing procedures be limiting what we are finding to only simple bugs?"
- "What would happen if we did some 'outside the box' testing?"

Tell people stuff

Testers have access to a lot of useful data

Data is useful for directing questioning

Data can be processed into knowledge

Data shared to the right stake holder at the right time can have a great impact!

Be balanced in your political style

- **As testers we have a tendency to be too much "power of ideas style"**
- **People might not take you seriously then**



Cover Your Arse!

Be aware of YOUR risks

Whenever there's a risk that you can end up as a victim, state your position

Always CMA in writing

- Make sure you keep CMA e-mails

Don't say anything you will later regret

If there's a chance you will be misunderstood, avoid communication

Don't forget your teflon suit at home ;-)



Ethics

Why am I doing this?

Who am I doing it for?

Am I doing 'the good'?

Is there an ethical problem?

I'm not really that concerned!

Some things to help:

Be aware of your political style in different situations

- Avoid being over political OR under political

Guide yourself by your values:

- "I do right things"
- "I respect others"
- "I take responsibility for my own issues"
- ...



Open season

Suggestions:

- Share your own tactics
- Ask questions
- Debate ethics

Thank you!

Books to inspire:

- Niccolo Machiavelli: **The Prince**
- Rick Brandon, Marty Seldman: **Survival of the Savvy**
- Daniel Gilbert: **Stumbling on Happiness**

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