

# The Tireless Mind of a QA Engineer

She steps onto a bus and as the engine revs, wonders why on earth the woman in front of her is holding onto the handrail as if her life depended on it. The ensuing jolt, however, quickly dispels that thought and replaces it with a different one altogether: *Bad driver.*

As she grabs hold of the nearest hanging strap, she makes a mental note to herself to telephone the bus company as soon as she arrives at work. Reporting the incident will admittedly take a few minutes she doesn't have, but on the bright side, lives will be spared...

*Oh! What the—* a bulldog is now licking her favourite pair of shoes.

"Come on," says the owner of the cheeky canine before moving further along the aisle. *They really shouldn't be allowed in here,* she mutters to herself, wiping off the drool with her trusted handkerchief as she does.

## OUR STORIES: THE TIRELESS MIND OF A QA ENGINEER



As the bus continues to make its way through the city, she instinctively begins to scan every last inch of the vehicle, spotting anything that needs improvement, including a faded "No Food or Drink" sign nearby.

*SPLASH!*

“Oh my gosh! I’m so sorry!” a teenage boy apologises from behind. She takes a deep breath before slowly turning around to discover her trousers covered in a pungent liquid.

“It’s ok, honey,” she takes a sip of his coffee. “That’s why I always wear black.”

## **A QA Engineer Is Always Prepared**

It takes a certain breed to become a quality assurance engineer, and perhaps no one knows this better than QA Manager Julie Karpenko and Technical Leader Andrew Slewzer.

“We are utter perfectionists,” Andrew explains. “When you are a QA engineer, that is your lifestyle. Other people may be perfectly content with the system, but you will constantly be looking at all the possibilities — on the bus, at home, wherever you go.”

The 29-year-old has been working for Software Planet for six years now, and ever since graduating from university, has never once looked back.

His colleague Julie, of the same age, has been an SPG employee for a little over a year, but the two of them are one of the same.

“I call it the QA aura,” Julie says. “We are all extremely curious people who just don’t let broken things stay broken, and we have to always be prepared for whatever life throws our way, because we work with a wide variety of people.”

## **The Role Requirements**

According to Andrew, this leads to the need to be well versed in a lot more than just technical knowledge.

“QA engineers should be familiar with the system as a whole and how it behaves, but they should also understand the business domain,” he said. “You are looking for the *business value* of the system, after all, and of course, this will include making sure the final product is right for end users too.”

Julie agrees:

“Because you’re working with developers, customers as well as other QA engineers, you have to see the project from many different points of view. Everyone is focused on their own little tasks, but if you can’t step back and see that bigger picture, then you will be unable to deliver the necessary level of quality.”

## How This Is Accomplished

The duo shared that at SPG, every one of the QA team’s eight members is encouraged to be in a constant state of learning. So whether you are a seasoned QA engineer or just getting started, each day will come with new opportunities for expansion and growth.

“We have weekly meetings that aim to educate our team on the many spheres of knowledge they should be apprised of,” Andrew said. “At the moment, for example, we are simultaneously working on five different projects, but we still think it’s important to find the time to keep the knowledge flowing.”

And of course, what better teacher than experience itself? Andrew recalls his own involvement in a particularly challenging project:

“A few years back, I worked on a product that was neither a standalone program nor a web application, it was somewhere in between the two. But instead of playing with something like Firefox or Chrome, the company we worked with wanted to use their own custom browser for the project. So I basically had to figure out a way to communicate with this browser I had never seen once in my life, and that included no documentation at all. But you know what!? It was tough, but we did it, and it was a fantastic learning experience in the end.”

## The Best QA Teams

By now, you probably get the sense that quality assurance engineers appear to be a lot more positive and forward-thinking than the average person.

But in reality, this is only part of the story, as Julie believes the best QA teams are made up of three critical components: knowledge transfer, support, and most importantly, *emotional intelligence*. Her own experience in all these areas has been phenomenal at SPG.

“I have a mentor here that is always helping me to make tough decisions,” she said. “But really, everyone at Software Planet has made me feel a part of the family, so it’s

been a pleasure to work with so many interesting and open-minded people. As a QA engineer, every person you work with brings invaluable lessons, because they represent the entire spectrum of emotions that you can get.”

She laughs.

“That is probably my favourite part of the job.”

## ***Screech!***

Mercifully, the bus grinds to a halt at her usual stop.

“Here, take my card,” the QA engineer tells the driver, deciding not to report him after all. “Tell your boss I’d like to talk to him. I have a few ideas.”

The driver looks confused, but as the card is dropped onto his hand, he obediently nods his head.

“We’ll sort your company out,” she says and gleefully smiles. “But for goodness sake, *slow down!*”