

Software Testing Case Study



Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
www.delni.gov.uk

Invest
Northern
Ireland

Software Testers Academy Champions:

Name: Gareth Burnside
Position: Test Team Lead

Company: Kainos
Sector: IT Services

Employees: 300 World Wide
Website: www.kainos.com

My 'Pathway' into Testing

Having left school at 16 years of age, with eight GCSEs (none of which were ICT related), Gareth took the decision to attend the Ballymena campus of Northern Regional College (NRC). There he studied for and successfully achieved a BTEC in Computer Studies. This led to an HND in Computing and the opportunity to attend the University of Ulster, where Gareth was awarded a BSc in Computer Science.

"To be honest I wasn't sure what I wanted to do when I left school. I attended an open day at NRC and really liked the sound of the Computer Studies course. I applied and was accepted. It was a brilliant course and opened a number of doors for me, finally giving me the opportunity to attend university."

Gareth's University degree included a sandwich year and he was fortunate to be offered a place with global IT giant, Intel. Intel's Irish operation is based in Co. Kildare and is the company's largest manufacturing site outside of the United States.

"I applied for the position of Junior Software Tester with Intel having spotted it on the University's placement year website. Thankfully I was offered the position as it was a great experience. "

Working in Intel's IT Innovation Centre, Gareth was given the chance to get involved in a diverse range of projects, including ergonomic software testing. "I really enjoyed my year with Intel. The style of



working really appealed to me, it was less processed than many other placement posts and I found that I came away with a lot more experience. Working for such a well known brand at such a young age was fantastic" explains Gareth.

When Gareth's placement year finished, he decided to return to university to complete his studies despite being offered a contractor position. "I always wanted to return to Northern Ireland and having completed my time at Intel I was ready to tackle my final year."

It was during his final year that Gareth noticed an advertisement that had been placed by Kainos for Trainee Testers. He applied for the position and was interviewed soon afterwards. The process went well and Gareth was offered a job upon completion of his degree.

"I was delighted when I was asked to attend Kainos for an interview. It was a tough process, but things went my way and I was offered a Trainee Tester position. To secure employment prior to finishing my degree was a huge relief and really allowed me to concentrate on my finals without the added pressure of answering the 'What Next' question!"

Having completed his degree in June, Gareth started his career with Kainos in July 2008 - and as far as Gareth is concerned Kainos has been a superb career choice.

“Testing is a great career choice for many reasons, but for me, I thrive on getting involved at the early stages of a project and being able to positively affect the final outcome”

Gareth Burnside

“I’ve been with the company for four years now and I’ll be honest with you, I’ve loved every minute of it! Kainos have really looked after me, encouraging and providing me with fantastic opportunities to progress my career. I joined Kainos as a Junior Tester and am now a Test Team Lead. It’s been a steep learning curve, but one that I wouldn’t change.”

My Career with Kainos

Gareth has certainly experienced a wide range of projects across a diverse range of sectors since beginning his career in 2008. “I remember my first software test project very well. Working on a telecommunications project for Eircom, I got the opportunity to test the system as well as playing an active role in writing test cases and strategies.”

There was a lot for Gareth to take on, especially as he had come straight from university. He embraced the challenge and appreciated the opportunity he had been given.

Gareth settled quickly and showed a real flare for testing. To date he has been involved in over 20 projects ranging from those that last for two to three weeks, to ones that last more than six months. The projects are varied e.g. website testing, record management systems, SharePoint sites, insurance quotes sites and charity websites.

With the spectrum of projects being so varied Gareth and the rest of the test team move around a lot. “There are 11 testers in the team at the minute. We are all working on different projects and move to the various development teams as required. However, as testers, we are very keen to get involved in the projects as early as possible.”

This type of working is viewed as vital to delivering client success in Gareth’s opinion, “by integrating the development and test elements of a project from the get-go it becomes much easier to manage and test the requirements earlier in the project delivery life cycle. The bigger the project the more beneficial this process becomes.”

Have you got what it takes?

Gareth clearly has a passion for his job and it would seem that it was this attribute and general questioning nature that has helped to propel him up the Kainos career ladder. But what does he feel are the traits needed to become a good software tester?

“A keen eye and attention to detail would be right up there for me. Clients want their solutions to be perfect and that is something that we must strive for. There is no point in releasing the best solution; if the function buttons, for example, are labeled incorrectly. If this happens then we will undo a lot of good work and potentially damage the company reputation.

“I tend to view the test team as a ‘gateway’. If the software isn’t right, then we’ll not release it. It’s not about showing our developers up, it about allowing Kainos to deliver the best client solution, first time.”

Software Tester Academy

Gareth views the launch of the Academy as a positive move and he is more than happy to see non-IT graduates coming into the sector. “For me a person’s background is irrelevant. What is important, is a desire to succeed and a questioning attitude. Many of the people in the team are from a non-IT background and they are brilliant testers.

“Testing is a great career choice for many reasons, but for me, I thrive on getting involved at the early stages of a project and being able to positively affect the final outcome.”

