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# IBM Rational Manual Tester: Automated support for non-automated testing

Level: Introductory

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from The Rational Edge: This article describes a new tool that supports manual testing, still the method of choice in many software development organizations. IBM Rational Manual Tester helps business analysts and others accelerate and improve the results of their application validation testing.

*The last ten years have seen substantial improvements in applications supporting requirements management, application design and development, code analysis, and unit, system, and deployment testing. In turn, these solutions have helped developers improve the quality and speed delivery of software applications that drive core business functions. In the hands of skilled users, the new breed of test automation tools makes it far easier to deliver high-quality applications. However, despite these advances, the majority of software testing is still done manually.*



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## Business analysts as testers

Why are so many companies reluctant to embrace automated testing? One reason is that, until now, test automation tools have largely ignored the needs of a large category of people who test software: business analysts. These employees play a key role not only in defining business needs, but also in ensuring that these needs are met through the development and deployment of new processes and systems, including software applications.

With their deep understanding of the business drivers behind a development project, business analysts can "hit the ground running" when it comes to validating the new application's business capabilities -- as well as its stability and functionality. Tools such as IBM® Rational RequisitePro® for requirements capture and management and IBM® WebSphere Business Integrator® for business process modeling help these analysts create and manage business use cases for new software applications. But IBM Rational Manual Tester is the first automated tool that truly supports their testing activities.

## The testing process for business analysts

Business analysts often perform tests based on specifications or use case documents that define the software application. These documents provide detailed guidance on how the application is intended to operate, including its core and alternative flows. Following these specifications, business analysts typically test the software application manually and document their findings in a format familiar to them (e.g., Microsoft Word or Excel). Most do not have the skills or the time to become proficient with the test automation tools that developers and professional testers use. In addition, they often begin testing business use cases early in the development cycle, when the application does not have the stability required for automation. Forcing analysts or other non-technical testers to master test automation might have an undesirable result; it can shift their focus from "Does this application meet my company's business needs?" to "What testing can I automate with this tool?" So, if we acknowledge that manual testing is a valid approach for analysts, end-users who are performing acceptance testing, and even professional technical testers, what can we do to improve the

speed and efficiency of their testing?

## **IBM Rational Manual Tester: A brief overview**

IBM® Rational Manual Tester® is an easy-to-use automated tool designed to both accelerate and improve accuracy for manual testing. It is suitable for teams employing both automated and manual testing methods as well as those that have no test automation tools. Key capabilities include:

- A modular, "building-block" approach to test authoring
- Simplified test maintenance with single-point updating
- Rich text editing to develop robust, readable manual tests
- Bulk importing of manual test documentation from Microsoft Word and Excel
- Assisted data entry to improve accuracy and speed for manual test execution
- Assisted data comparisons during test execution
- Support for distributed teams

Let's look at each of these capabilities in more detail.

### **A modular, "building-block" approach to test authoring**

Taking a modular approach to application development is a best practice that most development tools support. It allows different teams to work separately on different components, and enables developers to assemble applications more quickly by reusing common components. Some automated testing tools also use this approach for test development. They allow testers to design components they can then assemble to create a suite of tests to validate an entire software application. This approach has not been typical for manual testing because the tools traditionally used to document manual tests are not designed for it and do not provide building-block capabilities. However, with IBM Rational Manual Tester, you can assemble tests from components that document a set of steps for testing a small area of the application. You can also reuse each component to assemble a variety of larger tests that validate an application use case.

### **Simplified test maintenance with single-point updating**

Test components shared among multiple tests are said to be "linked." With IBM Rational Manual Tester, when a change to an application under test affects a linked component used in multiple tests, the test author only need update the steps in the test component once. The tool automatically propagates the change to all the manual tests that share that component. Typically, test script maintenance, whether manual or automated, is the single largest drain on testing resources. This single point updating capability brings greater efficiency and lower maintenance costs to both business analysts and testing teams.

### **Rich text editing to develop robust, readable manual tests**

IBM Rational Manual Tester provides the ability to author manual tests using rich text editing features. This allows users to boldface text to indicate product buttons or menus to select during the test, use different fonts to indicate data to type during test execution, and use folders to group logical blocks of steps and embedded images that provide additional detail for the test executor to follow. All of these capabilities make the test easier to follow during execution.

### **Bulk importing of manual test documentation from Microsoft Word and Excel**

If your manual tests are already documented in Microsoft Word or Excel, with IBM Rational Manual Tester you can bulk-import the content and jump-start manual test creation.

### **Assisted data entry to improve accuracy and speed for manual test execution**

For manual tests, the test executor must typically enter data into the application to validate a business use case. This may involve large amounts of data or complex data strings. With IBM Rational Manual Tester, you can make this process more efficient by authoring tests that take advantage of the tool's assisted data entry feature. Simply supply data that the test executor can reuse automatically instead of manually entering it into the application. This speeds up the data entry process and also ensures that the data required for test execution is entered accurately.

### **Assisted data comparisons during test execution**

In addition to entering data, testers need to verify that the data displayed, or output by the application, is correct. With IBM Rational Manual Tester, the test author can supply the expected output data when documenting the test. Then, during execution, comparators, which are tools that provide a visual display of the difference between actual and expected behavior, will assist the tester in ensuring that the data output is identical to the pre-supplied data. These assisted data comparisons help verify that the test was performed accurately.

### Support for distributed teams

Today, development teams are more dispersed than ever. Organizations must take advantage of all available resources to stay competitive -- wherever those resources happen to be. Application testers are often widely distributed. That's why IBM Rational Manual Tester is architected to make it easy for teams to share tests and results, and to leverage version control tools to manage changes to tests.

### A bridge to automated testing

For teams that plan eventually to adopt automated testing, IBM Rational Manual Tester provides an excellent bridge. It introduces team members to the underlying principles of test automation tools such as IBM Rational Functional Tester: modular test design, and tool-assisted data entry and data comparison. Your testers can easily learn those principles without having to master a complex test automation tool.

### Implementing IBM Rational Manual Tester

The design of IBM Rational Manual Tester adheres to the principle "keep it simple." Testers need not endure a complex, lengthy setup process or weeks of training and consulting to use the tool productively. They can focus right away on writing good tests instead of figuring out how the tool works. Rational Manual Tester offers many technologies commonly available in rich text editors, along with simple drag-and-drop test component creation capability. To help users make a smooth transition to IBM Rational Manual Tester, it is packaged with a product tour and tutorial. For those who want to explore its advanced features, a one-day training class is available through IBM Rational University.

### Conclusion

IBM Rational Manual Tester is the only tool on the market today specifically designed to improve the most popular testing method: manual testing. Designed to fit the skill set of business analysts, testers and end-users who perform manual testing, it can help them improve their speed and efficiency for test development, execution, and maintenance. It can also serve as a bridge between current manual testing processes and future test automation. With Rational Manual Tester, your team can focus on delivering a high-quality application while bypassing the typical complexities of building, executing, and maintaining complex and modular tests.

You'll find more information about this new product at:

<http://www-306.ibm.com/software/awdtools/tester/manual/sysreq/index.html>.

### About the author



Sandra Wilkey works for the IBM Rational software brand as a specialist in software quality products. Before holding this position, she worked as a sales and technical representative in Rational's sales organization. She has been a regular speaker at Rational's annual user conference as well as numerous software development and automated testing trade shows and conferences..



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