

Microsoft® Security Essentials: Global Users, Global Testing



Microsoft®
Security Essentials

Testing Projects @ a Glance

- Testers: 100+ testers
- Geographic Coverage: 10+ countries
- Testing Type: Exploratory
- App Type: Desktop
- OS: Multiple versions of Windows

Customer Spotlight

- Location: Global
- Industry: Software
- Company Size: Publicly owned; more than 75,000 employees
- Dev Methods: SCRUM Agile

“Assumptions become reality after a while,” said Shie Erlich. “And before long, you stop questioning them altogether.”

As Test Lead for **Microsoft Security Essentials** – the company’s no charge anti-virus software – Shie refused to assume the testing procedures in place were sufficient on their own. And as one of the more anticipated Microsoft projects in recent memory, he knew that any bugs found post-release could instantly, perhaps permanently, harm the app’s reputation with consumers.

With that mindset, and with the official release date for Microsoft Security Essentials fast-approaching, Shie set out make expanded testing coverage a reality - signing on with **uTest** in January 2009.

But with tens of thousands of beta users, a rolodex of outsourcers and one of the top in-house labs on the planet, how could the Microsoft Security Essentials team possibly *improve* their testing coverage? Where were the dark spots? And how would uTest help shine light on them?

This case study will detail Microsoft’s use of the uTest community, demonstrating how five distinct test cycles - performed by professional testers from around the world - enabled the Microsoft Security Essentials team to successfully launch their product with an even higher degree of confidence.

Getting Started: Selecting Testers, Defining Scope

With the help of a uTest project manager (there’s one assigned to every uTest customer), Shie’s first order of business was to select a testing team and define the testing scope in a way that complemented their existing QA efforts. Since Microsoft Security Essentials would be released to a global audience, he needed to validate Microsoft Security Essentials’ use in countries like Brazil, China, India and Russia, as well as the US and Israel.

“You wouldn’t believe some of the behaviors we observed on these home machines,” said Shie. “So when you are testing for performance, it’s imperative to know how the software runs outside of the lab environment.”

For example, Shie pointed out that many Chinese users don’t rely on a lone anti-virus program. Thus, the Microsoft Security Essentials team had to verify that their product functions concurrently with other such applications. In order to ensure its real-world compatibility (along with certain usability issues unique to China), he needed testers who actually resided in China.

With uTest, Shie was able to add these testers (along with dozens from other countries) who had the specific OS, browsers and plug-ins that he needed. From there, he simply uploaded a list of known bugs, and the initial testing cycle was set to kickoff. Unlike an outsourcing firm, the on-ramping period with uTest is not complicated.

Test Cycle #1: Exploratory Testing of Microsoft Security Essentials

Since core testing for Microsoft Security Essentials was performed in-house, the uTest community was first tasked with executing multiple exploratory testing cycles. In the initial test cycle, which included virtually no boundaries, testers from all over the world were given their first look at Microsoft Security Essentials and were free to submit any issues they encountered.

“They were encouraged to search for whatever they wanted,” said Shie. “We weren’t sure what to expect, but we ended up discovering some valuable bugs. It was a very effective process.”

Test Cycles #2 through #4: Installation, Upgrade and Regression

While the initial test cycle had been exploratory, the second test cycle included a detailed test script to be executed by the uTest QA team. In addition to completing Microsoft’s test scripts, testers reported bugs and other issues as they performed installations and upgrades of the Microsoft Security Essentials software. With the help of his uTest project manager, Shie reviewed the list of bugs, approving and rejecting them based on scope, clarity and accuracy.

After a week of bug-fixes by the Microsoft Security Essentials development team, Shie’s next release would focus on regression testing. In this cycle, select members of the uTest community validated the backend changes made by the Microsoft Security Essentials team, ensuring that nothing was broken in the process, and giving Shie the confidence he needed to proceed with the launch. “Each test cycle was different, but valuable to us in its own way,” said Shie.

“The great thing about Microsoft Security Essentials is the subtlety. There are no pop-ups, no messages trying to sell you something – nothing that’s in your face. It was designed to be quiet and non-intrusive, which makes it drastically different than other anti-virus products on the market today.”

-- Shie Erlich,
Testing Manager, Microsoft



(Left): In July 2009, Microsoft released Microsoft Security Essentials, once code named “Morro,” to 75,000 beta users in the US, Brazil and Israel.

Test Cycle # 5: Showstopper Challenge

With a community of 40,000+ testers, uTest is in a unique position to implement some unconventional QA procedures. Much like the uTest **Bug Battles** – a competition where testers compete to find bugs in today’s high-profile apps – the final phase in Microsoft Security Essentials’ testing would involve some outside-of-the-box thinking. To be certain that Microsoft Security Essentials contained no fatal flaws, Shie issued a “Showstopper Challenge” to his testing team: Find a showstopper bug (a bug that **MUST** be fixed prior to launch) and win a prize.

“The bar was set incredibly high for this release,” said Shie. “But the uTest community performed as expected. It was interesting to incentivize a release like that – fun for the testers and reassuring for our development team.”

Summary

With the help of a dedicated uTest project manager and a select group of QA professionals, the Microsoft Security Essentials team was able to confidently launch a high-profile app on an aggressive schedule. Completing five distinctly different test cycles, Shie was able to achieve an even greater degree of testing coverage – and greater confidence before launching.

The reviews are in (see the sidebar), but don't take their word for it.

Click the image below to begin downloading Microsoft Security Essentials.



As future projects arise – whether they're [mobile](#), [web](#) or [desktop](#) applications – Microsoft now knows it has an efficient, low-cost way to complement their existing QA efforts.

Why uTest

Early reviews of Microsoft Security Essentials have been impressive. With no serious bugs or usability issues, Microsoft Security Essentials has quickly become a fan favorite. User reviews: Another reason to test extensively before a major launch.

Boston Globe: *“Microsoft is now changing the game, the same way it changed the Internet browser business - by giving the software away.”*

Houston Chronicle: *“In the past, I've recommended AVG Free for those who want a no-cost security option. Given its light footprint, I think Microsoft Security Essentials is now the better choice.”*

NetworkWorld: *“Security Essentials has a pleasing interface, is simple to use, and has appropriate defaults. Its warning pop-ups let you deal with an issue quickly or dig in for details.”*

The Register: *“We gave the software a quick spin and found the initial install process quick and painless.”*

For more on how uTest can help your own company improve the testing process, check us out online at www.utest.com or call **1 (800) 445-3914**.

In their own words...

On beta testing:

“Beta's are not as effective as other methods of testing. An issue must affect a large amount of users in order for it to be discovered and reported by a beta community. The uTest community, on the other hand, was able to review the software from a tester's point-of-view, and that made all the difference in the world.”

On testing coverage:

“We wanted to test across every possible angle, which is impossible if you're relying solely on your in-house team. We needed exposure in areas like South America and China, and uTest enabled us to achieve this with relative ease.”

On uTest's adaptability:

“It was really quite impressive to watch bugs and feedback come in from all over the world. The theory works!”

- Shie Erlich
Testing Manager, Microsoft