Beta Test Management Glossary

The following is an overview of the common vocabulary used throughout the beta testing process.

Alpha

A quality phase just prior to beta testing that typically includes employees and/or friends and family, focused on a less-stable and often feature-incomplete prerelease product

aka Pre-Beta

Beta Applicant

An individual who has explicitly expressed an interest in participating in a private beta test

aka Beta Candidate

Beta Community

An online collection (i.e. database) of users who have expressed an interest in participating in a company's beta program

aka Beta Panel

Beta Key

A unique string of characters which grants access to either a beta test or beta product

aka Serial Number, Product Key, Beta Code, Beta Token

Beta Manager

The primary individual responsible for orchestrating a beta test

aka Beta Administrator, Project Manager

Beta Objective

A defined goal of a beta test; often influenced by product management, quality, engineering, marketing, support, and/or sales

aka Beta Goal

Beta Portal

A website dedicated to providing beta information, releases, and feedback functionality to beta testers and internal beta team members

Beta Product

A prerelease version of a product which serves as the focus of a beta test; typically at or near feature-complete, likely includes a number of known and unknown bugs

Beta Program

The entirety of beta related tests, methodologies, and systems within a company

Beta Site

An individual test location encompassing one or more users participating in a beta test project; typically used in a business context

Beta Team

The complete pool of beta testers associated with a beta test, often broken into sub-teams based on demographics or other defining attributes

Beta Test

A coordinated project intended to improve the quality of a prerelease product by collecting feedback from prospective customers; each individual beta test may or may not include multiple test phases

aka Beta, Beta Project, Field Trial, Prerelease, User Acceptance Test (UAT), Friendly User Test (FUT), Customer Acceptance Test (CAT)

Beta Test Plan

A document detailing the objectives, target market, internal beta team, and processes for a specific beta test

Beta Tester

An individual selected to participate in a beta test

aka Participant, Tester, Customer, Member

Beta Tester Agreement

The legal agreement which dictates the participation responsibilities of the beta tester

aka BTA, Beta Participant Agreement (BPA)

Beta Unit

A preproduction hardware unit which will be distributed to a beta tester

Bill of Materials

The complete set of components (packaging, beta unit, cables, documentation, etc.) that will be delivered with a beta unit

aka BOM

Bug Report

Feedback provided by a beta tester which details an unexpected failure or defect in the product (typically includes a title, description, steps to reproduce, severity, category, and related file attachments)

Compliance

The measurement of how thoroughly beta testers meet the base level participation requirements set for them

Crash Report

Technical details regarding an application crash, typically generated automatically by the beta product

Customer Validation

Umbrella term describing the primary purpose of beta testing

Demographic

Quantifiable customer traits such as gender, age, ethnicity, language, disability, employment status, and location, which can be used for segmentation

Feature-complete

A state in which a product has all of its planned or primary features implemented, commonly reached by a product before or by beta

Feature Request

Feedback provided by beta testers in the form of a suggestion or idea intended to improve the product

Feedback

Refers to information provided by beta testers, often in the form of bug reports, feature requests, and survey responses

Feedback Loop

The process in which feedback is submitted by beta testers, reviewed, and addressed by internal beta team members, which helps increase overall beta participation

Forum

An online discussion board intended to allow communication between the beta and internal teams; typically secured to ensure that they are not publicly available or search indexed

Frequency

The amount of times a bug report or feature request are encountered within a beta test

Friends and Family

Used to identify beta testers as being related to the product team or company; often includes actual friends and family in addition to employees

Impact

The effect that a bug or feature request will have on the product based on both frequency and severity

Incentive

A reward provided to beta testers who meet or exceed their participation obligations (often includes keeping the beta product, receiving a final product, gift codes, or similar rewards — typically not cash)

Internal Beta Team

The group representing the beta test from within a company; may include individuals from a wide variety of groups such as quality, engineering, support, and marketing

Journal

Feedback provided by beta testers in an open text format which details their ongoing experience with the beta product

Leak

Information about the product (in the form of text, photos, or video) which has been exposed in direct violation of the NDA

Nomination

Employees or existing beta testers recommending additional beta applicants or beta testers to participate in a beta test

Non-disclosure Agreement

A legally binding agreement between the beta tester and the company which indicates the beta tester will not reveal or discuss the beta product and/or their involvement in the beta test

aka NDA, Confidentiality Agreement

Onboarding

The initial customer experience of using a product; a typical focus of many beta tests

aka Installation, Out of the Box Experience (OOB), New User Experience (NUE)

Participation

The active contribution of a tester to the beta test, usually in the form of regularly logging into the beta portal, submitting bug reports and feature requests, contributing to forum discussions, and completing tasks and surveys

aka Engagement

Persona

A term borrowed from marketing in which users are grouped into named segments (e.g. "Jenny", "John") based on their demographics and other traits; a method of providing additional context when considering feedback

Phase

One portion of a beta test project divided into different timed elements; may introduce additional beta testers, objectives, and/or beta releases; often linked to individual releases by name (e.g. Beta 1, Beta 2, etc.)

Private Beta

A beta test in which participants have been invited by internal team members, most often after applying and completing a qualification survey

aka Closed Beta

Public Beta

A beta test in which participants are free to join without an application process

aka Open Beta

Qualification Survey

A short questionnaire intended to qualify the target market and enthusiasm of beta applicants

aka Application Survey

Recruitment

The act of soliciting users for a beta project; generally includes announcing qualification requirements, optional qualifications and/or incentives (when relevant); applicants who express interest in this stage are subsequently prompted to complete a qualification survey

aka Callout

Regression

The process of re-testing specific issues which are believed to have been addressed

Release

An individual beta build which will be distributed to beta testers (in the case of software beta tests, this may include multiple beta builds); often given identifiers such as Beta 1, Beta 2, etc.

Survey

A series of questions asked of beta testers intended to collect information relevant to a beta objective or related topic

Task

An activity assigned to individuals or groups of beta testers in order to influence or ensure beta testing coverage

Testimonial

Feedback provided by beta testers which acts as an early statement of satisfaction of the product, intended to assist with future sales and/or marketing

Test Period

The actual period in which testers are using and reporting feedback on the beta product

Test Platform

The system or environment in which the product is being used, such as the PC used to test software, the phone on which an app was tested, or the browser used to test a website

Triage

The process of analyzing and organizing feedback prior to distribution to the appropriate internal beta team members

Viability

The state at which the product is stable enough to be beta tested

aka Beta Ready

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