THE DELTA TESTING

Quickstart Guide



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Who Is The Delta Testing Quickstart Guide For?

You — a busy product professional who's convinced there's a better way to run the current user testing initiatives at your company.

Maybe you're under pressure because the program is costly, and while it's working *okay*, it's ridiculously hard to show its value.

Or maybe recruiting, soliciting feedback from testers, and organizing feedback is incredibly time-consuming, and you're a part-time user testing professional or a solo act with other things you need to do.

Or maybe agile development is running circles around your current field, beta, or UAT processes, which makes driving your roadmap with timely customer feedback an exercise of futility.

Whoever you are, you've come to the right place. Delta testing enables companies to streamline, automate, and measure their user testing efforts. It allows them to perfect their products with customer-driven insights and grow revenue faster.

The Delta Testing Quickstart Guide provides a straightforward overview of automated user testing processes, highlighting the key points you need to know, such as:

- What delta testing is, who uses it, when it's most effective, and how it drives quality and innovation
- The four simple things you need for delta test success
- How it all comes together — and the benefits you can expect when it does

We hope this guide will be your first step toward incredible new product insights surfaced through more effective, efficient, and impactful user testing.



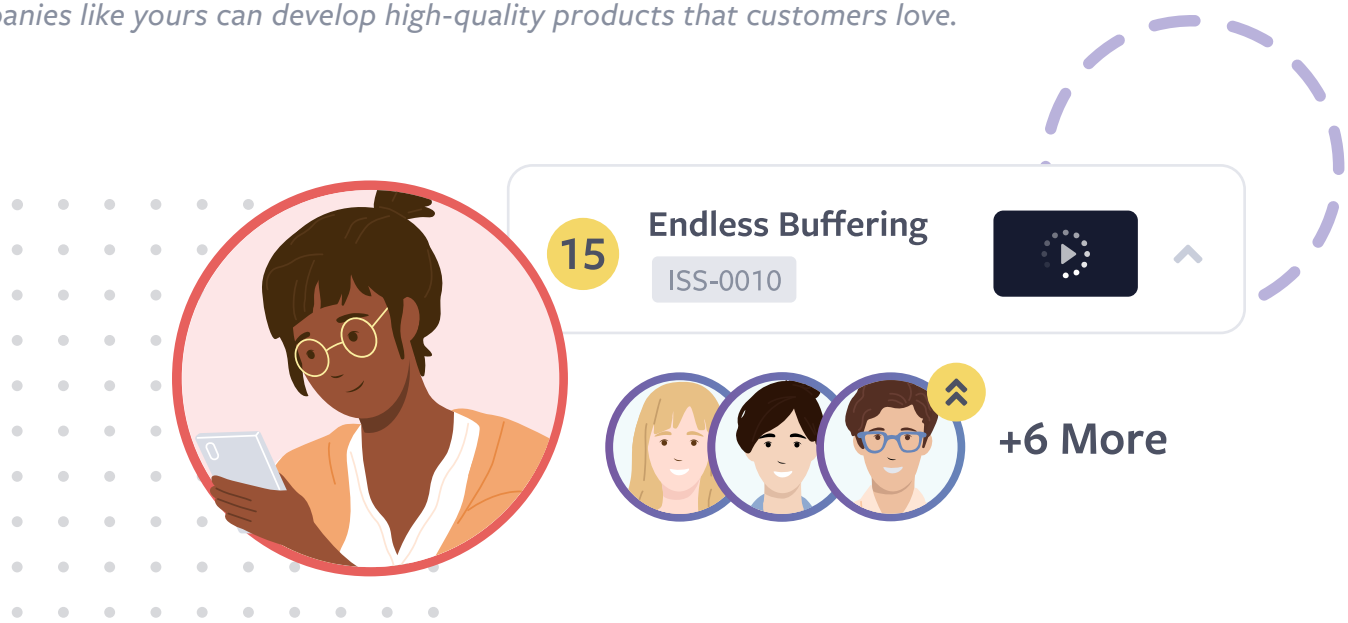
Delta Testing, Defined

Let's start out with a definition.

WHAT: *Delta testing is a movement in modern product development that reimagines beta and other forms of user testing in a continuous fashion. Delta captures early product feedback from users leading into each release throughout the product development life cycle.*

HOW: *It provides a technology-driven methodology for automating user testing to support agile development, generate more actionable feedback, and maximize product success.*

WHY: *So companies like yours can develop high-quality products that customers love.*



Who Uses Delta Testing?

Companies and Products

Leading companies, from high-growth technology to the modern enterprise, use delta testing to deliver frictionless technology products with seamless interoperability.

- Connected hardware and IoT products
- Consumer software, business software, and SaaS
- Mobile apps and games
- Streaming and entertainment services

Program Owners

Delta testing is executed by professionals from diverse fields of expertise to prioritize bug fixes, user experience issues, and feature requests so that they continue to develop products that delight their audiences.

- Product teams
- QA engineers
- Beta, field, and UAT program managers
- Engineering directors and managers
- Support directors and managers

Stakeholder Teams

With benefits for many different teams, the results of delta testing are used throughout the organization to drive product success.

- **Product** teams gain actionable insights to drive roadmap decisions and a community of on-demand testers that can be leveraged throughout the entire product development life cycle.
- **Quality Assurance** teams achieve expanded test coverage in a fraction of the time and without having to invest in buying more devices for the lab.
- **Engineering** teams have the insights they need to focus on fixing the issues and implementing the new features that have the greatest impact.
- **UX/CX** teams use delta to further their initiatives, since it increases the scope of their work to include user and customer experiences over time.
- **Support** teams gain intelligence to prepare for initial customer issues, which helps them enhance the customer experience and brand image.
- **Marketing and sales** teams gain a better understanding of your customers and the standout features they love so they can more effectively market and sell your product.
- **P&L owners, finance, and leadership** leverage early feedback and star ratings to help with the predictability of product sales.

When Is Delta Testing Used?

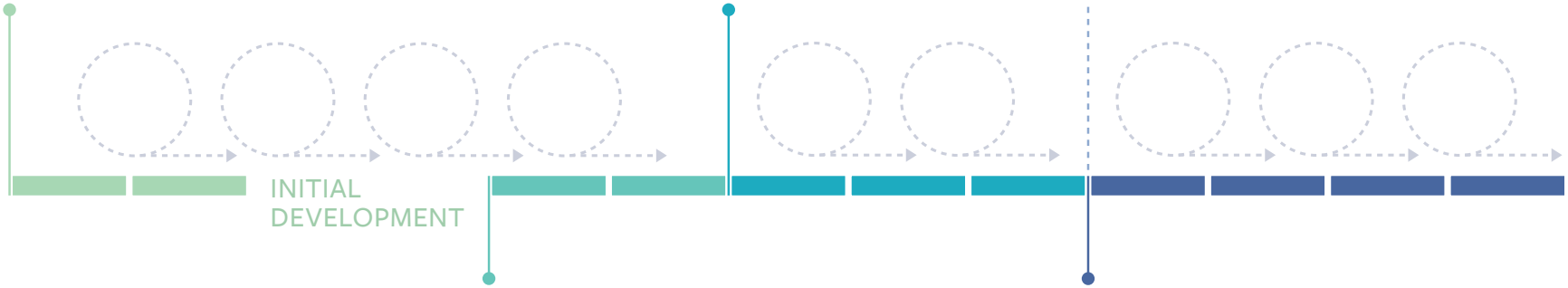
Companies use delta testing throughout the entire product development life cycle. It replaces alpha testing, dogfooding, beta testing, UAT, field testing, and continuous user testing. There are many different use cases for delta testing, and each one is focused on getting feedback from distinct, targeted audiences early and often. Here are the four most common use cases:

Competitive Testing

Research and test competitors' products with **potential customers** to make sure you have product-market fit and differentiation in your product specifications.

Product Release Testing

Get **target customers** to test your product so you can gain insights and identify any remaining bugs to fix or improvements to make before launch.



Employee Testing

Develop a product-centric culture by collaborating with **employees** in order to surface real-world user experience issues.

Product Iteration Testing

Capture input from **actual customers** on an ongoing basis to ensure that every release is successful and to cultivate a group of product evangelists.

How Does Delta Testing Make an Impact?

DELTA TESTING DRIVES QUALITY AND INNOVATION

So far, you know that delta testing allows you to capture continuous, real-world customer feedback throughout the entire product life cycle. But what does that do for your product and your organization? The fact is, capturing customer feedback is a means to the larger end of what delta testing actually does for your company and the success of your products.

Completes the Critical "Last Mile" in Development

All customer research and product testing efforts throughout development cover unique ground and add unique value — delta testing is no different.

Delta testing is the singular program that puts functioning products into the hands of targeted users, which gives them time to absorb and adopt the products out in their real-world environments. This context means delta is uniquely positioned to validate the results of previous customer research investments.

By tying those investments together and ensuring the final product or feature reflects all of the lessons learned, delta testing carries your product through the critical "last mile" of development and takes it from good to great.

Supports Agile Development With Customer Insights

Incorporating delta testing throughout the product development life cycle enables you to test and iterate on new concepts much sooner and drive faster innovations that are essential to outpacing competitors.

Similar to agile sprints, delta testing operates on a fixed cadence, with cycles that typically last a few weeks. Each test cycle focuses on the "delta" between new features, fixes, and experiences against the current live version. For new products, the "delta" is the product's full feature set.

The tactics and tools used for delta testing are optimized for speed and scalability, so that each team has the customer insights it needs in real time.

Delivers on Contemporary Corporate Initiatives

Delta testing offers a unique contribution to product success because it builds on typical corporate initiatives, including innovation, quality, customer satisfaction, digital transformation, and customer co-creation. Delta optimizes engineering efforts with impact-based recommendations for product fixes and improvements, and provides a step-by-step path for reaching key targets, like increased star ratings.

Fosters a Customer-Centric Culture

By making customer input more accessible, abundant, and continuous at your organization, delta testing gives customers a stronger role in shaping your product. It ensures that the voice of the customer is factored into every specification, design, build, launch, and growth decision that Product, Engineering, and Marketing make by delivering feedback earlier and more often throughout development.

Delta moves your company away from bias and anecdotal decision-making towards a customer-centric culture with increased awareness and alignment around customer needs.

Delta Testing at a Glance

Delta testing success is primarily determined by four things:

1. **Your inputs**. The key ingredients you'll need in order to generate quality customer feedback.
2. **Your raw data**. The customer feedback delivered during your project in its raw form.
3. **Your business system**. The people, processes, and technologies that enable you to not only generate more data, but also turn it into actionable insights.
4. **Your outputs**. The business value you deliver to stakeholders in the form of insights.



The same inputs, system, and outputs apply across delta testing use cases. You can review the four most common use cases on page 4.

Your Inputs

The unique context of delta testing is that it generates feedback by getting functioning products into the hands of targeted users and giving them time to absorb and adopt the products out in their real-world environments.

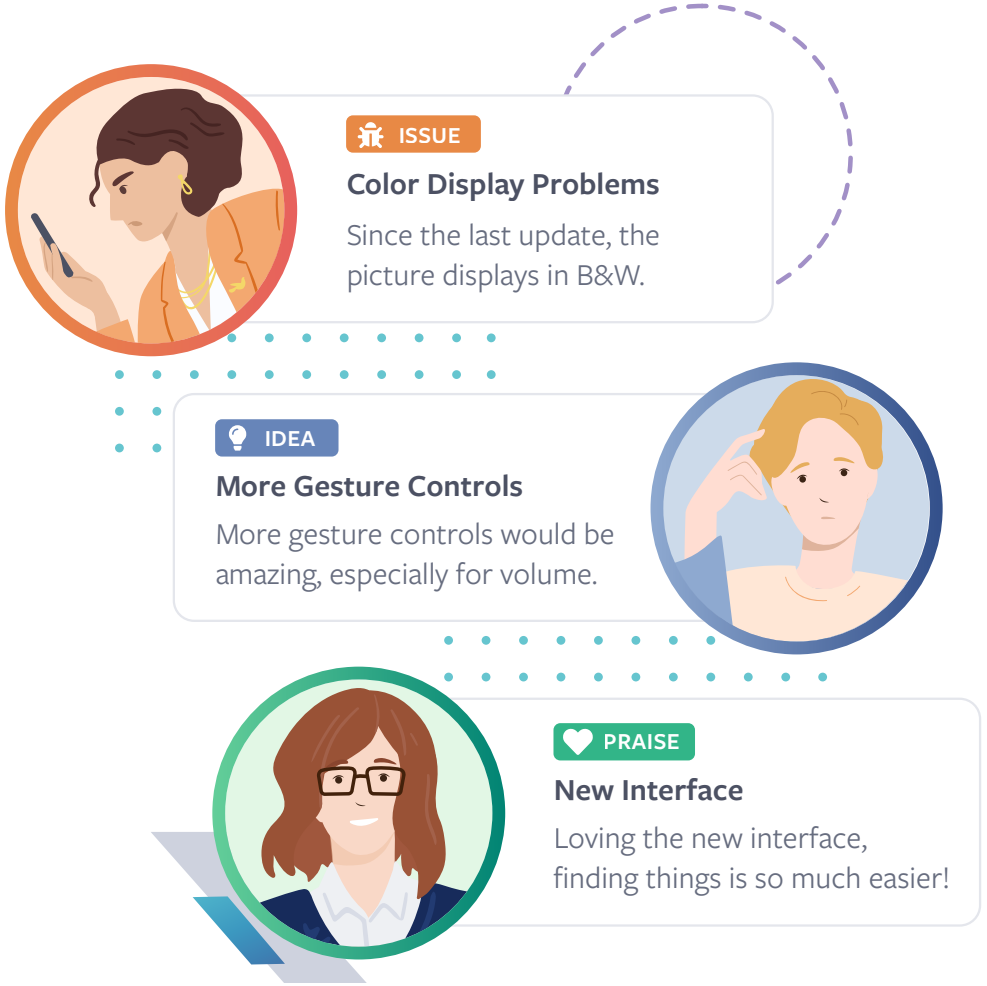
- **'Functioning products'** means giving testers more than a prototype, wireframe, or vertical slice to evaluate. Whichever features or experiences your test focuses on should be as close as possible to the state they'll be in when paying customers use them.
- **'Targeted users'** may look different depending on your delta testing use case (when engaging with coworkers during employee tests, for example). But the idea is simple: The people who will provide feedback that's most relevant to your product's success are users who share demographic similarities with your current or potential customers. They should also have a genuine interest in helping you improve your products.
- **'Real-world environments'** are about more than just the places where your products are being used. They encompass the myriad of devices and usage conditions that all color your customers' interactions with your product. To effectively validate your product across a wide enough range of use cases, you'll need to use technographics to make sure it's tested in technology ecosystems and contexts that are consistent with your target market.
- **'Time to absorb and adopt'** means allowing enough time (usually a couple of weeks) to fully experience your product, explore its features, and let it soak into their lives. You'll start getting feedback about their experiences from day one, but the extra time allows you to surface deep-seated bugs and critical errors that only arise from everyday use over time.



Your Raw Data

The feedback generated during delta testing can take many forms, but the four most common are:

- **Issues** represent problems (often bugs) experienced with the product's quality, interoperability, and real-world performance.
- **Ideas** reflect the acceptance of your product and provide the customer's viewpoint on the features that already work, but could go further to elevate their experience.
- **Praise** highlights the distinct features and experiences of the product that your testers adored and will in turn delight your customers.
- **User satisfaction scores** capture an individual user's overall perception of a feature on a familiar 5-star scale, showing if their experience was generally positive, neutral, or negative.



Your Business System

Delta testing is coming of age in a world driven by digital transformation. And like any modern business system, scalability and ROI are achieved through the successful combination of:

- People who are motivated and capable of bringing change to the business,
- Processes that structure people's activities and can be improved over time, and
- Technologies that maximize people's efforts and enhance business processes.

PEOPLE

Whether you're running delta tests on your own or you have a team dedicated to the program, some important skills for delta testing success are:

Project and program management. The project-based structure of delta tests means you'll need the ability to negotiate priorities across teams, create plans that deliver on key objectives, communicate with stakeholders effectively, move tasks through the pipeline, and be a leader in your organization.

Business analytics. Delivering impactful results requires the ability to absorb, visualize, and discuss large amounts of data and complex concepts. You'll also need to use the available information to make decisions and solve problems.

Technical aptitude. Proficiency with technology solutions is becoming increasingly important during delta testing. Using traditional productivity tools is no longer enough for test managers to achieve success. Although modern delta testing technologies are easy to use, getting the most out of them still requires a certain level of technical aptitude.

If you don't have the right skills on staff, you'll need to augment your current staff with training, external consultants, and/or additional hires.



Your Business System

PROCESSES: INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before getting started with delta testing, your company should think about the following processes:

Internal Alignment

- What defines a successful test for your stakeholders?
- How does each member of your testing team prioritize their time?

Delta testing delivers the most value to organizations that use it to refocus product development processes on the real-time needs of modern customers.

Measurement and Metrics

- What key metrics do you report on a weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis?
- How do you measure project or program ROI?
- What key performance indicators (KPIs) will you use to determine if your testing processes are on track?

Delta testing allows test managers to go beyond traditional metrics (number of bugs submitted, etc.) and use metrics like project health score and impact analytics to both measure and forecast what stakeholders care about most: product success.

Feedback Quality

- Is your incoming feedback limited, missing, or incomplete?
- Do you have dirty feedback that's full of duplicates and inactionable reports?
- Are you collecting actionable feedback (issues, ideas, and praise)?
- How will your feedback be triaged and analyzed to ensure your projects don't suffer from "garbage in, garbage out"?

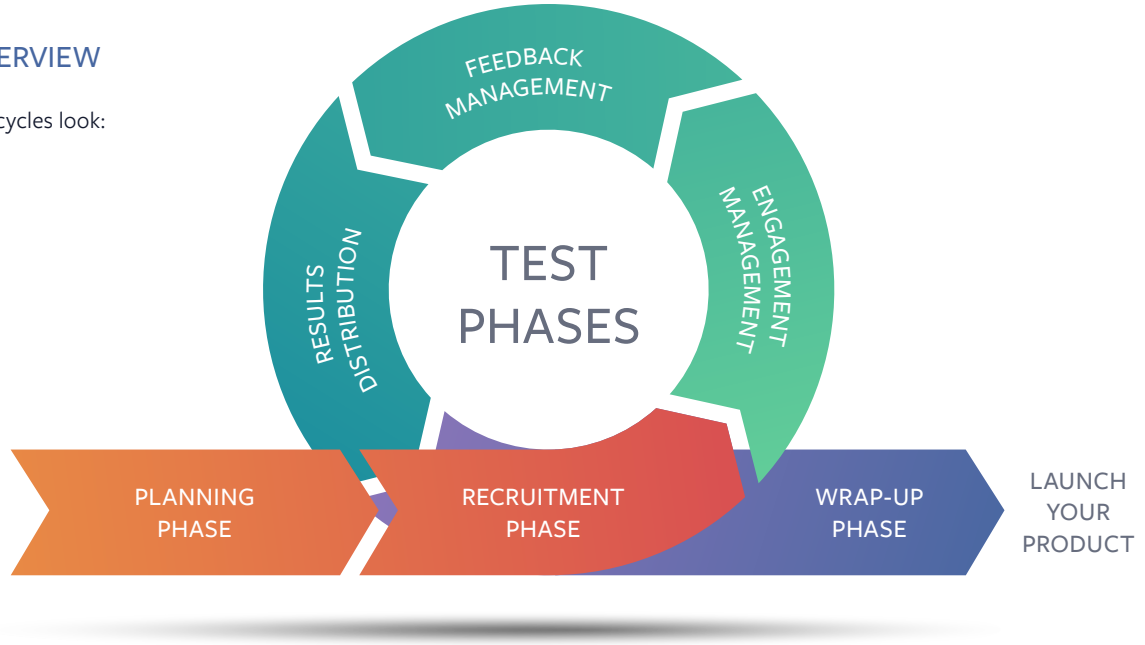
Quality feedback is essential for any successful delta testing program.



Your Business System

PROCESSES: CYCLE OVERVIEW

Here's how typical delta testing cycles look:



PLANNING

Goals & objectives

Definition of activities

Tester requirements

Project setup

RECRUITMENT

Test promotion

Applicant qualification

Tester agreements

Product distribution

TEST

Automated engagement

Activity completion

Feedback collection

Weekly recommendations

WRAP-UP

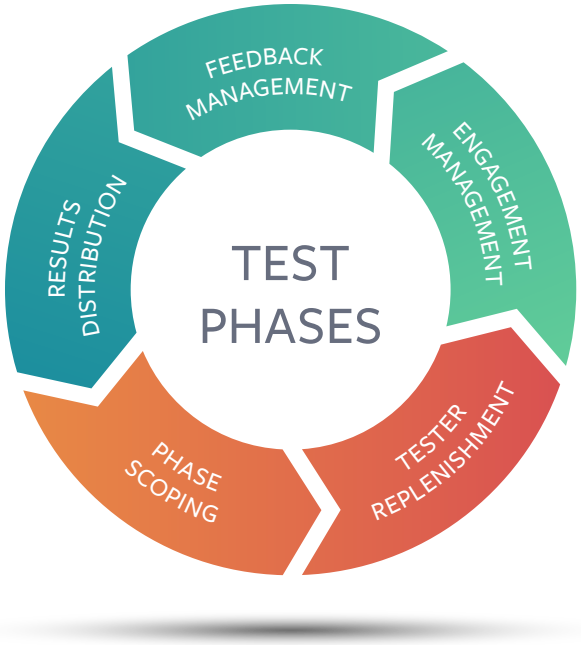
Final recommendations

Lessons learned

Product returns

Incentives

Your Business System



PHASE SCOPING

Pick the features, experiences, and activities that you'd like your testers to focus on.

TESTER REPLENISHMENT

Fresh testers are added to address increasing requirements and/or offset any natural attrition.

ENGAGEMENT MANAGEMENT

Testers are engaged by an automated agent, based on their individual performance and behavior.

FEEDBACK MANAGEMENT

Issues, Ideas, and Praise are enriched by collaboration. Results are prioritized by Impact Score.

RESULTS DISTRIBUTION

Smart dashboards are automatically generated to summarize all results, broken down by feature and phase.

Your Business System

TECHNOLOGY

Delta testing relies on technologies that are centralized and are designed to not only reduce friction in your program, but also lighten the workload for you and your team.

To get the most out of your investments and your delta testing program, it's important to invest in technologies that target traditionally difficult and time-consuming areas of user testing, like maintaining tester engagement and managing copious amounts of feedback.

You can read more about must-have technology capabilities in *The Definitive Guide to Delta Testing*, but here's an overview of the features that will save you the most time and have the highest impact on delta testing success:

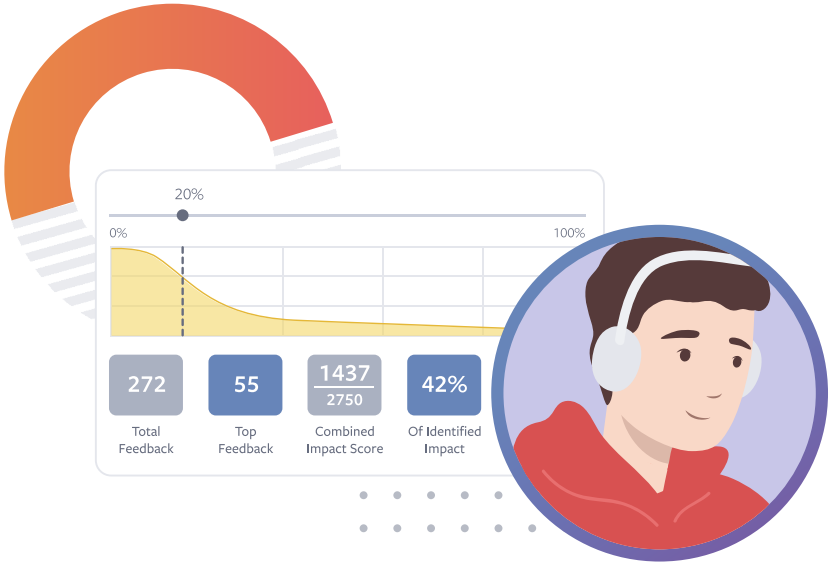
- Demographic and technographic profiles that surface best-fit testers and contextualize their feedback.
- Engagement automation that keeps testers actively participating in your project for you.
- Workflows that keep feedback organized and flowing through triage and routing processes automatically.
- Smart scoring that prioritizes incoming feedback, based on aspects like the feature's importance and how many testers had similar issues or feature requests.
- Project health scores that provide insight into which aspects of your test (tester engagement, for example) are impacting its success.
- Product success analytics that give you a step-by-step path for which feedback to address in order to reach specific targets, like increased star ratings.
- Integrations that keep your data, processes, and insights flowing smoothly across testing activities and business disciplines without requiring manual effort from you or your team.
- Privacy and security features that make it easy for you to protect your company's confidential information and comply with privacy laws like GDPR and CCPA.



Your Outputs

Delta testing delivers actionable, prioritized insights that fall into five categories:

- **Fix recommendations** provide clear prioritization for addressing issues that are harmful to the user experience and the success of your product.
- **Improve recommendations** help you steer your roadmap and keep your organization focused on adding and improving the features and experiences that customers want to see most.
- **Promote recommendations** enable you to enhance product positioning by focusing marketing messages around the features and experiences that most resonated with your target audience.
- **Feature satisfaction scores** highlight the features and experiences that need your attention most, based on user perceptions, and show you specifics on which aspects of each feature to fix or promote for greatest success.
- **Success benchmarks** allow you to predict and track your product's level of success with a running score that balances the impact of fix and promote recommendations.



As staples of your delta testing results, these recommendations and scores give you a straightforward path for achieving greater product and feature success.

Conclusion

There you have it: the basics of delta testing and how it can benefit your company.

You now know that delta testing gives you the real-world customer insights you need to drive innovation, increase quality, and perfect your products. You also know the formula for running a successful delta testing program.

And if you'd like to talk with us about your user testing program, *put some time on our calendar today*.

Ready to dig deeper into delta testing? Get *The Definitive Guide to Delta Testing* and sink your teeth into everything you need to know — from where delta testing fits in with other user research practices, to choosing delta testing tools, to building a business case that convinces stakeholders, and more.



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Delta Testing Solutions



WHY CENTERCODE?

Increase Revenue
½ ☆ INCREASE
in product ratings

Release Sooner
50% FASTER
test cycles

Gain Participation
75% INCREASE
in tester engagement

Save Time
40%+ DECREASE
in time managing tests

The Centercode Platform equips you with the automation and best practices you need to get actionable user insights for any use case.

PRODUCT LAUNCH

Engage your **Target Market** to successfully bring new products and services to market

USE CASES:

- Beta Tests
- User Acceptance Tests
- Field Tests

PRODUCT GROWTH

Recruit **Existing Customers** to continuously mature live products and services

USE CASES:

- Progressive Delivery
- Early Access
- Customer Advisory Boards

CUSTOMER ZERO

Gather **Employee** feedback to enhance your products while fostering a product culture

USE CASES:

- Alpha Tests
- Dogfooding
- Employee Tests

COMPETITIVE EDGE

Enlist **Competitors' Customers** to rapidly gain actionable intel about their products

USE CASES:

- Competitive Intelligence
- Market Testing
- Comparative Research