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by KARI KAKKONEN

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## **HOW TO MAKE YOUR TCOE AS GOOD AS TOP GUN ...OR WHY TCOE'S CAN FAIL (AND HOW TO PREVENT IT!)**

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# WHAT TO DO WHEN THERE IS NOTHING TO DO?

By NADIA SOLEDAD CAVALLERI, Argentina

Lately, I find that many professionals are on the bench. Bench means being employed by a company but not being assigned to a billable project. So, even though you are hired by a company, you are not working and you are waiting to be productive.

Why would people be on the bench? Medium and large companies usually have people without assignments to ensure that they have a reserve of talent available to assign to new or existing projects in case additional needs arise.

Having people on the bench can be costly because the company has to continue paying the salaries and benefits of those employees. However, it can also be beneficial for companies to have these people with immediate availability because it allows them to be more agile and flexible when staffing a project.

The motivation of this article is that there are increasingly more people on the bench because companies hired more professionals than they needed based on a wrong projection. But fortunately, the forecasts for the second half of the year are favorable, and these people on the bench should find an allocation. But what can you do in the meantime?

## UPDATE YOUR RESUME

It is good for your resume to be up to date. If you haven't done so in a while, now is the perfect time to do it. Make sure to include all your most recent skills and achievements. This will help you and your manager find new job opportunities that arise and fit your skills, knowledge and experience.

## PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS

Many times, before entering a new project in the current company, we have to go through a technical interview. Another thing you can do while you're on the bench is to prepare for interviews. Make sure you're ready to answer common interview questions, and also consider practicing a simulated interview with friends or family. This will help you feel more comfortable and confident during the next interview.

## TRAIN YOURSELF

Take advantage of this free time to train and improve your skills. Look for courses that are relevant for your work. Platforms like LinkedIn Learning and Udemy are very useful. You may also consider getting a certification. At this point, your manager's feedback can be essential in guiding your professional path. You can ask your manager about the most in-demand skills and look for trainings in those areas. Remember that the best way to learn is by putting into practice what you've seen in the course, not just by watching videos.



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Nadia is an information systems engineer and psychologist. She has been working in testing and quality for more than 17 years. She is the co-founder of Argentesting, the Argentinian testing congress. She was a judge on the Software Testing World Cup and is part of the review committee of many conferences and certifications. She was recognized by Abstracta as one of the most influential women in testing, by Glubant as Digital Leader in Argentina (2021) and by ISTQB as one of the Global Finalists for Excellence Awards.

## RESEARCH TOPICS OF INTEREST

It's also important to stay up-to-date with relevant topics in software testing and the quality industry. Research, read and put in practice topics that are relevant to your career. This will help you stay updated with the latest advancements in our industry. You might be interested in topics such as observability, artificial intelligence testing, new automation tools or frameworks. This is the perfect time for you to delve into them.

## SHARE KNOWLEDGE WITH THE COMMUNITY

Another way to make the most of your time on the bench is to share your knowledge with the testing community. Participate in conferences, webinars, workshops and groups and share your expertise with others. This can help you expand your network and potentially lead to new opportunities.

## PARTICIPATE IN INTERNAL INITIATIVES OR NON-BILLABLE PROJECTS

It can be a great way to use your time on the bench. Often, companies have a backlog of tasks they want to complete but lack the resources to do so. This is where you can step in and contribute to the company's goals. It's not necessary you develop a new software. It could be process improvements or corporate social responsibility initiatives.

## STOP PROCRASTINATING TASKS

Another way to use your time effectively on the bench is to tackle those pending tasks that have been put off for too long. These could be personal tasks like getting a paperwork done that you've been avoiding, or it could be work-related tasks that you've been unable to prioritize due to other projects. Whatever the case may be, now is the time to take advantage of your availability and finally get them done.

I hope I have provided you with useful ideas so that you can make the most of your time on the bench. It will probably be short, and you may miss it when you don't have it, so take advantage of it like I did, writing this article during my bench period.

