Standard Regression Testing Does Not Work

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Standard Regression Testing

• Check out the latest from the version control system
• Kick off a script that runs a lot of tests and present the test results
• Email the engineer(s) who have committed new changes to the VCS since the last time the test(s) passed
Blame – 3 Standard Options

1. Blame all commits since last pass
2. Blame the first commit that caused the test to fail
3. Don’t blame anyone. Manually debug the test failure
The Standard Approach

“If we just test often enough then we will know who caused each regression failure”

Hey, it’s this guy!

Unfortunately this is totally unreliable!
What We Measured

Is that the reason the test fails on the latest?

If so, undoing the change should make the test pass
We checked 916 bug reports in ASIC projects

In 41% of the cases the bug report was wrong!

Why is this simple approach so unreliable?
Accurate/Inaccurate Blame

Accurate Blame

“This commit was the reason this test started to fail”

Inaccurate Blame

“The test must still fail for the same reason here”

A lot of things happen after the first failure
Inaccurate Blame

Many Scenarios

41%

Overlapping Failures 1

Overlapping Failures 2

Random Instability

Intermittent Failures

Build Failures

Test Failure 1
Test Failure 2
open bug
open bug
open bug

Random Scenario 1
Random Scenario 2
testbench update

Test Failure
Intermittent Failure

Test Failure
Build Failure

test not run
Two Solutions

1. Prevent Complexity
   – Test one commit at a time
   – Strict Continuous Integration

2. Handle Complexity
   – You must debug correctly all complex scenarios
   – PinDown, automatic debugger of regression failures
Strict Continuous Integration

Test each commit. Only let it in if the tests pass

Test failed
Bug report sent back to engineer

Test passed
Change is integrated into the Revision Control System (RCS)

Perfect if complete test suite takes minutes and does not contain random tests. Very popular in the software industry.
Test & Debug Framework

PinDown TestHub

Email Bug Reports

Test Executor (LSF Farm)

PinDown Results Database

Version Control System
Rerun on Old Revisions

Rerunning tests on older revisions to find bad commit

• Only takes 1 – 4 reruns of the failing test to find culprit
• Combines revisions in order to analyze complex scenarios
• This is only done for one test per bug
Farm Usage

- Typical cost for re-running tests: 10 jobs on the farm
- Good investment to avoid next test run to show same state
Benefits

400% Faster Fixes, 5x Less Discussion, to 11% Shorter Projects
## Summary

### Standard Regression Testing

**Bad Commit Known**: No

**Benefits**
- Automatic Triage: No
- Bugs Fixed Faster: No
- Less Debate: No
- Shorter Project: No

**Support**
- Large Test Suites: Yes
- Random Tests: Yes

**Cost**
- Debug Testing: Yes (manual)

### Strict Continuous Integration

**Bad Commit Known**: Yes

**Benefits**
- Automatic Triage: Yes
- Bugs Fixed Faster: Yes
- Less Debate: Yes
- Shorter Project: Yes

**Support**
- Large Test Suites: No
- Random Tests: No

**Cost**
- Debug Testing: No

### PinDown

**Bad Commit Known**: Yes

**Benefits**
- Automatic Triage: Yes
- Bugs Fixed Faster: Yes
- Less Debate: Yes
- Shorter Project: Yes

**Support**
- Large Test Suites: Yes
- Random Tests: Yes

**Cost**
- Debug Testing: Yes (automatic)