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As the name suggests, performance testing is all about testing the speed, reliability, and efficacy of devices, networks, programs, and hardware. In the case of user-interfaces, it may also apply to the ease-of-use or navigability. Regular testing helps determine whether devices are working at peak speed and also utilizing resources optimally. For this reason, the process of performance testing can be a comprehensive one, involving several functions across the area or device that is to be tested for its performance. Performance testing thus, is not limited to a specific function or component, but has to be conducted across systems, at times in conjunction with other functions as well.

Performance testing may also refer to testing of human performance. It is easier to understand performance testing in this context: it is not so much about individual components performing; but about the final outcome of all the parts coming together to perform a single task.

Similarly, performance testing is extended to machines and their performance in, say, factories or manufacturing units. Depending on the requirements, performance testing can be a quantitative process, or a qualitative one.

When it is quantitative, it may be measurable in terms of units of time or fuel consumed, or number of man-hours utilized. In contrast, when performance testing is qualitative, it is expressed in terms of system performance, whether it is an IT system, or a mechanical one, or human performance to be measured. However, most performance testing may take both quantitative and qualitative results into consideration. This is because performance testing takes into consideration the entire system “and not its different components in isolation. Results of the performance testing for a system will be a sum total of the performance of its components.

Why Performance Testing?

In terms of Information Technology (IT) for example, performance testing is not just about determining speed, efficacy, reliability, and navigability. It is also undertaken to find and remove issues or problems in the system. These problems can be identified by means of applying a thorough performance test; the trouble issue or component can then be identified, isolated and then resolved. In general, to obtain meaningful results, the parameters for performance testing should be clearly defined. The better these are defined, the more helpful a performance test turns out to be.

The Significance of Performance Testing

The ideal performance test is one that measures end to end performance and user experience when testing applications, or undertaking application monitoring. Further, all these have to be undertaken together with other measurable units such as resources consumption, processing time, optimum utilization of resources, and the overall health of the system, including endurance. Care must be taken that when a system is being tested for performance, no application or aspect is overlooked or left untested; this can affect the result and present an incorrect picture of performance of the health of the system. For this reason, performance testing should be delegated to those with experience and expertise in the field.

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