

# Achieving 90% Participation

We achieve high participation from 90% or more of our beta testers. Find out how.

## The Participation Problem

Achieving an acceptable level of user participation is often the single most challenging aspect of executing an effective beta test. On average, a beta test results in sufficient participation from between **30% to 40%** of its participants. This means that in any given test, it is likely that more than half of the participants are simply taking the beta product and walking away. This increases the potential for leaks of confidential information and results in an enormous amount of wasted time, money, and energy, and in the case of hardware products - the extreme expense of needlessly producing and shipping extra pre-production product.

## Our Accomplishment

Centercode has achieved **greater than 90% participation** compliance on nearly every managed beta test we've conducted, and frequently reach 100%. We base compliance on specific goals which are predetermined for our participants and are clearly indicated when they join the beta test. Generally this includes multiple surveys, daily journals, problem reports, feature requests, completed tasks, and user forum participation.

## How Do We Do It?

We rely on our experienced service team as well as **Centercode Connect™**, our powerful beta test management suite, to run highly effective and efficient beta tests. The following are a few of the tools and methods we use to ensure exceptionally high participation rates from our users.

1. **We Maintain a Highly-Profiled Community** - Maintaining a global community of highly-profiled test candidates allows us to effectively (1) Recruit users who match the exact target market of the product; (2) Utilize the individual participation history of testers to build a responsive test team; (3) Infuse an understanding that good participation will result in future opportunities; and (4) Stress the importance and value that their feedback delivers to the customers themselves.
2. **We Conduct Highly-Effective Recruitments** - We send a clear message of exactly what we're looking for from our testers, strongly emphasizing what will be required of them if they should be chosen to participate. One important aspect of this is time expectations. Ensuring that users know exactly how long they will be expected to contribute allows them to plan their lives accordingly, resulting in less frustration on both sides.
3. **We Select Targeted Testers** - We focus on the exact target market of the specific product we're testing, finding users who would naturally use and benefit from the product. Having the best possible testers from the start of a project is the single most important aspect of successfully achieving high participation rates.
4. **We Provide Very Clear Guidelines** - We constantly provide clear guidelines to our participants to ensure they know what is expected of them throughout all phases. If something changes during the test, such as timelines or goals - we ensure our participants are fully aware of the change, enabling them to adjust their testing direction or schedules accordingly.
5. **We Promote Exclusivity** - We ensure our participants realize how unique and exclusive the opportunity is to participate in the project. We make sure they understand that their feedback is extremely valuable and that they personally have the power to influence the ultimate outcome of the product.

6. **We Offer A Great Interface** - Individuals have a threshold of available time and energy for effectively participating in beta tests. It is crucial to not waste these resources by having testers deal with a complicated feedback tool, but to enable them to focus on testing the beta product itself. Connect™, Centercode's beta test management software, provides beta testers with an extremely simple interface for all of their participation needs.
7. **We Provide Unique Project Tasks** - Connect™ allows us to easily provide tasks for our participants to accomplish and ensures that pre-defined project goals are accomplished. This effectively provides guidance for those users who may not otherwise be creative enough to find useful activities to do on their own. In addition to performing very specific activities, assigning somewhat vague tasks allow us to influence users to perform basic activities which may help uncover related bugs and drive additional feedback.
8. **We Collect Daily Journals** - The Connect Feedback Engine (CFE) allows us to go beyond standard bug reports, feature requests, and surveys. Daily Journals are a common mechanism we use to allow users to report on their day-to-day experiences with a beta product. Doing so encourages them to actively visit the portal on a daily basis and as a result, encourages other forms of participation.
9. **We Moderate User Forums and Feedback** - Beta participants become discouraged and stop providing feedback when they feel their efforts are falling into a "black hole". By constantly moderating and responding to both User Forums and Feedback, we ensure our participants understand they are being heard and that their efforts are valued and appreciated.
10. **We Closely Monitor Our Testers** - Connect allows us to easily monitor the participation efforts of all users within a Project. Doing so enables us to quickly identify any users who are falling behind, and contact them to offer advice and correction. Similarly, Connect allows us to accurately applaud those users effectively participating, encouraging even more feedback as the project progresses.

## Our Back-Up Plan

Unfortunately, while best practices can go a long way toward ensuring great participation from beta participants, circumstances may arise which reduce a user's ability to participate. This may include situations such as a change in employment, a sudden illness, or family-related issues. To address these situations, we recruit and retain an additional 10% of candidates as alternates. In the rare event a user can no longer participate effectively, we have excellent systems in place to utilize these alternates.

## Improving Your Participation

Whether you have dedicated resources for managing your own beta tests or not, our services and software solutions can help you get the most out of the beta testing process. Read more about our beta test management offerings at [www.centercode.com](http://www.centercode.com), or contact us directly for additional information.

## Any Other Questions?

We'd be happy to answer any additional participation or other beta-related questions that you may have.

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