

Maximising the Potential of Rig to Rig Trial Involvement

What practical steps can we take to ensure we make the most out of our platform participation in a rig to rig trial?



Let's face it, trials are expensive. Whilst rig to rig trials using land-based test sites over a secure wide area network are 70 times less expensive than live trials, it is still imperative to attain value for money and to maximise the benefit to the war fighter (or more precisely the force).

As odd as it may seem, the majority of steps to maximise the benefits of trial participation take place before you even start the trial. I have three tips in this bracket for you; there are other practical steps you can take both during and after the trial, but perhaps they can be for another article. These tips are simple actions that are all too often neglected in my experience, and as the saying goes, it's not rocket science!

So, the first tip is to remember a simple equation, **input=output**, or to put it another way, you only get out what you put in. You must ensure your platform objectives are clearly stated to focus your participation and maximise the benefits you can realise. Ensure relevant stakeholders have input to the objectives. This could (or perhaps should) be from both the operator community as well as the engineering community. Provide sufficient detail to allow the author of the trial documentation to satisfy your objectives.

Second tip - another thing to remember is "**review, review and review again**". Generally, trial documents will be provided well ahead of the trial, such as plans, specifications, scripts etc.

I cannot emphasise enough the importance of going through these documents carefully, once again ensuring relevant stakeholders are involved in the review process. Don't just look for mistakes, think about whether there is anything missing. I would also recommend formalising the review output; it doesn't need to be complicated but you need to ensure the person actioning your review comments can resolve them to your satisfaction.

So, make it as easy for them as possible, be clear on where the issue is, why it is an issue, and propose how to resolve the issue. Provide contact details so that clarification can be sought should the author need it, and when the updated documents are provided back to you, make sure all of your comments have been addressed adequately.

My last tip is to make sure you know how to carry out the test steps - ***practice makes perfect.*** I would suggest this practice is carried out as part of the review process, to allow for modifications to the trial documentation, if necessary. Too many times I have been supporting a trial and the platform operators have tried to action a step and nothing has happened or an incorrect response has been generated.

One of the challenges of multi-platform trials (and multi-national, potentially) is the level of detail. There is no way a test author can know the key sequences required by all participating platforms to carry out a required action. The author therefore has to produce generic detail that then requires the platform operators to interpret into platform specific key sequences. In a rig environment, there is usually a TDL test tool, such as the UK Multi-Link Test Facility, at various platform sites in the United Kingdom (UK). These test tools generally enable a scenario to be quickly developed to replicate the trial steps, and the key sequences can be perfected to ensure the correct generation of the required / expected TDL messages.

There is nothing more satisfying on a trial than to be able to fulfil your involvement efficiently and correctly, and conversely, there is nothing more embarrassing than failing to achieve what is expected through lack of preparation!

So, do your preparation and during the trial it should be plain sailing (forgive the pun for those of you in the maritime arena!), and I wish you happy testing!

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