

Have you ever watched [Inside the Actors Studio](#) ? You know, the show where James Lipton hosts famous actors in front of a small audience of students? Remember?

Anyway, this is actually one of my favorite shows on TV (and there aren't that many really). Towards the end of each show Lipton usually does the Bernard Pivot questionnaire " he asks the celebrity a series of short questions such as what is your favorite word / curse word / sound and it's really interesting and funny to hear the answers. I even learned that [Natalie Portman](#) and I have one thing in common " our favorite curse word...

I had played with the thought of doing my own kind of show called Inside the Verifiers Cubicle where I would host celebrities from the verification community and ask them all kinds of questions about verification, but then I wasn't quite sure whether or not NBC would be willing to pay for it. So I gave up on that and decided to keep things simple. I recently made up a Bernard Pivot questionnaire for verifiers which consisted of only 5 short questions and passed it around. Of course, I had to take the risk of people adding my email to their spam list but I'm a brave man.

So here's the questionnaire

1. What do you like the most about verification?
2. What do you dislike the most about verification?
3. On a scale of 1 to 5: Verification is an art (1) or an exact science (5)?
4. On a scale of 1 to 5: Verification is an ad-hoc effort (1) or an R&D project in its own right (5)?
5. A quick tip from your experience to the verification community?

And here are the results -

Not surprisingly the things we really like about verification involve planning and developing the verification environment. Some of us also like the opportunity to understand the full device and most of us get a kick from finding a major bug. What's more interesting though is that almost all of the contractors who took part in this poll stated money as one of the things they liked the most about verification!

What is it that we do NOT like about verification? Well, I got different answers from different people - things like filling coverage, preparing documents, handling resource problems and closing tasks that usually pile up towards the end of the project (I admit I don't like that either). But one thing we all seem to dislike is dealing with legacy code or having to maintain someone else's code. I wonder why

So if I had to conclude the first part of my survey in one sentence I would probably say that verifiers have a strong urge to be independent. They prefer to do all planning and coding on their own, they don't like being distracted or slowed down (documents, coverage closure, resource problems) and sometimes they even bring their independency to the financial level as well. Interesting observation, isn't it?

Ok, so in the second part of the questionnaire I wanted to find out how verification engineers felt about the nature of their own profession: Is it an art or an exact science? Is it an ad-hoc effort or rather " a project in its own right? Let's start with the second question where the answer was pretty much a strong 5 across the board. We all believe that verification is an R&D project in its own right and don't even want to hear about ad hoc efforts. I find it very interesting (and encouraging) that we all share this view as verifiers. I'm not sure though what the result would have been if I had included non-verifiers in the survey. Any volunteers?

So about whether verification is an art or not the average is about 2.5 but the variance shows that some of us treat it as an art while other as an exact science so there is no definitive conclusion here.

And now for the fun part! Every participant was asked to share a tip from their experience.

Here are the top 5:

- Think about what should NOT happen
- Know the spec an inch better
- Balance between code quality and schedule
- Hard to verify? Try asking for a waiver
- Do not assume anything

That's all folks. See you at the next poll! Many thanks to all the people who took part in this.

*Disclaimer: This post is from 2007*

