

In-the-SPIN

Newsletter of the Boston  SPIN

Issue 19, September, 1998

Editor: Carol Pilch

Editorial

At the July meeting of the Boston SPIN Steering Committee, we took a close look at *In-the-SPIN* and the results of the reader's survey conducted during the June meeting. (See Page 4 of this issue). What you see here is the results of that meeting and the survey analysis. In addition to the new format, we will be providing Email notification of newsletter availability along with the URL for the newsletter rather than providing the newsletter in its entirety in the Email message.

You will notice that *In-the-SPIN* now has two additional columns that will be a part of future editions. The "SPIN Committee Perspectives" column contains an article by a member of the SPIN Steering Committee that provides ideas and process topics that Committee members would like to share with the SPIN membership. This month's "SPIN Committee Perspectives" article is authored by the Boston SPIN Committee Chair, Barbara Purchia. Barbara provides some of her experiences working with managers to implement organizational change. In each edition, a different Boston SPIN committee member will be contributing to this column.

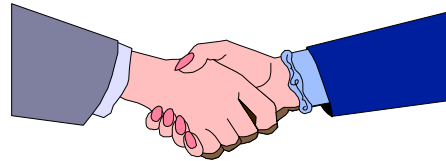
Another new column in *In-the-SPIN* is the "Feature Article." This issue's feature article presents the results of the newsletter survey. For future issues, we invite the Boston SPIN members to contribute articles of interest. Feature article selection uses the same criteria that is applied to select speakers at monthly meetings. Topics must be timely and convey issues of concern to our membership. The Boston SPIN is a non-profit organization. Therefore, the content of the feature article cannot be of a commercial nature.

If you are interested in contributing a feature article or would like to participate on the Boston SPIN newsletter committee, I'd like to hear from you. My Email address is carol.pilch@gsc.gte.com.

SPIN Committee Perspectives

Overcoming Resistance to Change
by Barbara Purchia

Barbara, Chair of the Boston SPIN Steering Committee, is Director of Engineering Operations at Kronos, Inc.



Imagine you are hired into a company to implement process improvement.

This company is over 10 years old. You are hired into a business unit with 1300 engineering personnel in 5 vertical business units with decentralized functions (except for finance and process improvement) and 5 Vice Presidents under two Senior Vice Presidents.

Imagine that one of the Senior VPs hired you and believes in process improvement benefits. Imagine that the other VP does NOT like process and feels that process implies bureaucracy and needless paper work. When people talk about process, they just say, "The 'P' word."

Imagine that each product development group has a different culture at different levels of maturity, and, in some cases, is at a different geographic location.

Imagine that you are 4 levels away from the Senior VP and that the 5 VPs don't get along.

Continued on next page

Boston  SPIN

Since January 1993

Software
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IN THIS ISSUE . . .

Editorial.....	1
SPIN Committee Perspectives	1
Boston SPIN Calendar	3
Meeting Summary	3
Feature Article.....	4
Boston SPIN	4

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Imagine a family of seven products that use a common set of components but where schedules and functional information are not known or shared. Imagine that most of the products or components do not identify, document, or communicate their specifications (internally and to other projects).

Imagine a company that has tried (at least twice) to implement processes and has tried to use technology to help the business unit “work together” without success.

Imagine that you have no product line responsibilities.

Imagine that you will have 4 bosses and 7 VPs in two years. Imagine that each boss and VP has his or her own style and agenda.

Imagine the pressure... Imagine the resistance... What would you do? How would you do it?

Remember one process implementation does not fit all. What worked at one company will not work at another. Do not preach or spout until you understand the environment, the people, and senior management!

Step 1 - Walk about, Talk about

The first step is to talk to people and listen! I started this step during the interview process. I determined what the Senior VP was looking for and what her style and operational modes were. I talked to several VPs, directors, and the process improvement group.

Ask lots of questions about how software development is done, the environment, the formal organizational structure, the informal organization, how things get done, how things get communicated, what are the unwritten rules, what problems are being encountered, and what would they like to change. Each organizational level has a different perspective; so be sure to include as many people as possible. Capture this information.

Step 2 - Set the stage

Analyze the information. Identify the problems, improvement opportunities, and steps to get to solutions. Present it to your staff and get feedback. Present it to your boss and get feedback. Present it to the Senior VP and get feedback. I took this presentation and a questionnaire and presented it to all Engineering VPs and got their responses to the questionnaire. These meetings were useful for several reasons:

- the VPs became aware of what we were trying to accomplish (based on organizational input)
- we gained their buy-in on the organizational problems and proposed solutions
- we were able to establish a process improvement baseline from the VP perspective

In addition, I made a presentation to the business unit that summarized the current situation and what steps were being taken to improve it.

Step 3 - Identify and align yourself with the key influencers and the early adopters

This particular organization was aligned based on product lines. The software engineering functions were decentralized.

Functional steering committees had been created to improve communications, commonality and synergy and to reduce or eliminate redundant efforts. Each steering committee had a VP sponsor and representatives from each product line. In addition, there were several task force efforts that had been started to resolve particular problems, such as improving our scheduling ability. The Process Improvement Group participated in several of the steering committees and task forces and in particular used the process improvement steering committee as a communications vehicle. One of the task forces consisted of directors from development, QA, documentation, program management, international product management and international development. This became the group that was most influential in determining and deploying problem solving initiatives.

Step 4 - Identify and establish ties with the resistors

As with any organization, there will be people who do not want to participate or change. In this case, many of them were at geographically remote sites. Find a way to involve resistors. In one situation, we were able to encourage the development directors from the remote sites to join the task force and participate in establishing common terminology and their definitions. We were very pro-active in soliciting feedback and coming to consensus on required milestones and their definitions. In another situation, we worked closely with the Marketing and Product Management VP and his organization to define and deploy a template for communicating project requirements.

Step 5 – Communicate

Let people know what you are doing. Communicate via Email, via public forums, via a common repository (like LotusNotes), via individual discussions. Go to meetings and promote what’s happening and promote accomplishments! The influencers and early adopters should be doing this also. Encourage and help them to deploy and communicate.

Step 6 - Involve yourself in development projects

Let people know that you are available to help, consult, listen, advise, coach, whatever they need. Be pro-active. At first, attend meetings and listen, and only offer opinions when asked. When you are more involved in the project, you can participate more freely.

Step 7 - If the organization changes at the Senior VP level, go back to step 1!

Many companies seem to change organizational structures frequently. When this happens, talk to the new VP, talk to your new boss, find out what will change and what will remain. You may not have to start over with all initiatives, but you may have to change your approach.

Step 8 - Don’t get discouraged

Look back every 6 months. See where you were, see what you’ve done, and look ahead to where you want to be and at the challenges. Don't lose your perspective! You wouldn't have been hired if there weren't problems! You probably have accomplished a lot even though it may have been slow going. Write down what has been done and communicate it. Every step forward is a step ahead!

Boston SPIN Calendar

Information about Upcoming Meetings

by Johanna Rothman, Program Chair

September Meeting Announcement

Topic: "Riding The Web Tide - A Practical Approach to Institutionalizing Project Management"

Speakers: Terie Rixman and Unmesh Gundewar

When: Tuesday, September 15, 1998. 6:30pm-8:30pm

Who: Everyone (Academia, Government, Industry)

Abstract:

Did you know that using the web to deploy project management processes could save you time and money? EDS' Wireless Division has recently put their process repository on their Intranet. This presentation will highlight the design of the repository and its home page content, the Project Model, which links project management methodologies with processes and templates. It will also describe the lessons learned while creating the process repository.

Location: GTE, 77 "A" St., Needham MA.

The Boston SPIN welcomes suggestions for speakers and topics. Topics must be timely and convey issues of concern to our membership. The Boston SPIN would like to hear about real-world experiences and "how" to accomplish/implement the information presented.

Provide suggestions for speakers and topics directly to Johanna Rothman, jr@jrothman.com or (781) 641-4046.

Monthly Round Tables

What: These are focus group or "birds-of-a-feather" sessions. The Facilitator will determine the format. This may range from no agenda with open forum (the "war stories" or informal "lessons-learned" approach) to a formalized agenda with prepared questions and position statements (perhaps to obtain industry feedback on shared key challenges).

Facilitators: Attendees proposing a Round Table topic will automatically become the Facilitator for that session. A member of the SPIN Steering Committee will assist as Scribe for the discussion. Round Table proposals may be submitted by posting a sign-up sheet with the SPIN Steering Committee Round Table Coordinator, Caroline Starita (staritac@amp.com). Proposed Round Table sessions will be posted for sign-up two weeks prior to the monthly meeting in order for attendees to register their interest.

When: 6:30 - 7:00 PM, before SPIN Meetings.

Meeting Summary

Notes from the June Meeting

by Carol Pilch

"Ten Things Every Project Manager Should Know About the Project Management Institute's Project Management Body of Knowledge Guide"

William R. Duncan, Project Management Partners



The Project Management Institute's "A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge" documents generally accepted practices of project management. It is the only project management standard recognized by the international project management community. The guide contains valuable insights into the process of project management. In this presentation, Bill Duncan, the primary author of the document, identified and explained the "Top Ten" nuggets. Here are a few of the top ten and some other nuggets.

- What is project management? - Definition from *A Guide to the PMBOK*. "The application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques... In order to meet or exceed stakeholder needs and expectations.
- Project success criteria - Defined as quantifiable criteria (cost, schedule, and stakeholder satisfaction metrics) that must be met for the project to be considered successful.
- Estimating vs. pricing - If the customer won't pay, FIRST, find out why and then accept lower profit or develop a new strategy. NEVER arbitrarily lower the estimate!
- Range estimates - Use them! Identify the optimistic, most likely and pessimistic and assign the probability of occurrence to each of these estimates.
- Work breakdown structure definition
- Earned value - Build/plot your baseline. Record/plot the actuals. Measure/plot performance.
- Lessons learned - Documenting lessons learned (honest admission) is basic to good project management.
- Role of the project manager - This is not described in the guide because there is no generally accepted role definition that applies to "most projects most of the time."

Feature Article

Newsletter Survey Results

by Carol Pilch



Here's the results of the newsletter survey that was conducted "live" at our June meeting:

Do you read "In the SPIN?"

Yes - 26
No - 14

If yes, about how much of each issue do you read?

Less than 25 percent - 2
25 to 50 percent - 10
50 to 75 percent - 13
Over 75 percent - 7

What articles do you find most useful?

SPIN Calendar - 20
Notices - 7
Meeting Reports - 25
The SPIN Doctor - 8

Is there any kind of news you would like to read but do not find in the newsletter? (no response)

What is your preference for "In the SPIN" distribution?

SPIN Web Site - 5
Email - 30

We received a number of recommendations from SPIN members to email the URL when the newsletter becomes available on the SPIN web site. We plan to do this from now on!

Boston SPIN

The Boston SPIN is a forum for the free and open exchange of software process improvement experiences and ideas. Meetings are usually held on third Tuesdays, September - June. Boston SPIN welcomes volunteers and sponsors.

For more information about our programs and events contact:

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For information about SPINs in general including ***HOW TO START A SPIN*** contact:

Dawna Baird of SEI (412) 268-5539,
dbaird@sei.cmu.edu.

IN THE SPIN is available on our Web page.

TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF NEW ISSUES send email addressed to danallen@danallen.com. We have 2 separate email lists: one for this newsletter and one containing announcements that we receive from other process organizations and forward out.

TO ADD YOURSELF TO THE ANNOUNCEMENTS LIST send email to ryan@sei.cmu.edu.

Send letter-to-the-editor, quips, quotes, anecdotes, articles, offers to participate in the newsletter committee, and general correspondence to Carol Pilch, carol.pilch@gsc.gte.com.

Send job postings to heimann@world.std.com.

Back issues and other information about Boston SPIN can be found at our WEB HOME PAGE:

<http://www.cs.uml.edu/Boston-SPIN/>