

In-the-SPIN

Newsletter of the Boston  SPIN

Issue 20, October, 1998

Editor: Carol Pilch

Editorial

This month's edition of *In-the-SPIN* focuses on project management. Johanna Rothman contributes an article to the "SPIN Committee Perspectives" column that gives insight into how to be an influential manager of people. The "Meeting Summary" column which Caroline Starita contributes a synopsis of the September SPIN presentation in which the speakers related their experience using an Intranet to standardize and institutionalize project management practices. In addition, for this month's "Feature Article" column I provide a review of the book "Managing Technical People: Innovation, Teamwork, and the Software Process", by Watts Humphrey.

At the time that I read the Watts Humphrey book, I was developing several software project management training modules. Other books related to project management styles that I found to be useful and insightful are:

- "The Wisdom of Teams – Creating the High Performance Organization" by John R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith
- "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People – Powerful Lessons in Personal Change" by Stephen R. Covey
- "Leading Teams – Mastering the New Role" by John H. Zenger, Ed Musselwhite, Kathleen Hurson, and Craig Perrin.

For future issues, we invite the Boston SPIN members to contribute articles of interest. 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.

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SPIN Committee Perspectives

This month's Committee Perspectives article is contributed by Johanna Rothman. Johanna is President of Rothman Consulting Group, Inc. and Vice Chair of the Boston SPIN Steering Committee.

Managing People

Using Influence

Effectively using your influence is an art, the art of getting other people to do the things you want them to – and willingly. Many of us have opportunities to practice using our influence when we have responsibility for results, but not



specific managerial authority. To be effective in these collaborative/consensus situations, you have to use your influence. Here are some ideas to keep in mind.

- **Be friendly and open to the other person's ideas and concerns.** Since I want this person to do something specific, I should be aware of their concerns. When I approach someone with a smile on my face and an open attitude, my colleague is more willing to listen to me.
- **Figure out the other person's WIIFM (What's In It For Me).** When I understand what motivates my colleague, I might be able to appeal to that specific motivation to get the job done. I have noticed that on project teams, some people are motivated by peer recognition of their work. Others are motivated by manager recognition of their results. Their WIIFMs are

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not the same, but we can generally make projects work by finding public recognition for some and manager recognition for others.

- **Listen to the people you work with.** If we are able to listen effectively enough, our teams will almost always tell us what they need from their organizations to be most effective. Once I hear what people want to have happen, I can then work with them to figure out how to make it happen in this particular context.
- **Allow others time to think.** I have to continually guard against my tendency to push my ideas without giving others a chance to really consider and question those ideas. Some people may need more process time to provide valuable input.
- **Remember that you don't own the whole problem by yourself.** Sometimes in a functional or project management capacity, you may feel as if you have to have all the ideas, and all the answers. But, you need to remember that you work with other people. On a development project, the ship date really is everyone's problem. When I consult in an acting manager capacity, I need to work with the whole organization to plan and work together to accomplish the ship date.
- **Don't be overly tied to your ideas.** Once you've agreed to work collaboratively (which is what you do when you work through influence), others might be able to improve on your work. Be sure you don't get in their way. Sometimes, we all find it difficult to let go of ideas that have served me well in the past. I try to remember that I can use those ideas as a possible starting place for a particular problem.

Developers, and even managers, often think of it as a waste of time imposed on them by some 'quality process' (e.g. ISO-9000 or the SEI CMM) rather than as an effective tool for solving or preventing problems.

Contrary to this impression, code inspection can be a very powerful tool for solving and preventing problems. This talk discusses the application of code inspection to solving one particular class of problems: software performance nightmares. I have chosen this example for a reason. Performance problems often come to our attention as fire drills, situations that demand immediate response. This talk discusses how to use code inspection in a product crisis, and then how to help convince your organization that code inspection can help in less stressful situations.

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

Future Program and Speaker Schedule

Date	Speaker/Topic
Nov. 17, 1998 @ GTE	Doug Orville "A Better Alternative to the KPA by KPA Approach to Process Definition and Process Rollout"
Dec. 15, 1998 @ GTE	(tentative) Alice Brown "Software Safety Analysis"
Jan. 19, 1999 @ GTE	Bill Silver "A Testing Assessment and Framework"
Feb. 18, 1999 Joint ASQ dinner at Holiday Inn, Newton (Thursday!)	James Bach "Good Enough Quality"
Mar. 16, 1999 @ GTE	Carol Pilch "A Tailorable Mini-assessment Method"
Apr. 20, 1999 @ GTE	Cem Kaner "Bad Software: What To Do When Software Fails"
May 18, 1999 @ GTE	Open
June 15, 1999 @ GTE	Open

Boston SPIN Calendar

Information about Upcoming Meetings
by Johanna Rothman, Program Chair

October Meeting Announcement



Topic: (Retrospective) Code Inspection for System Performance or "How Did That Get in There?"

Speaker: Benson Margulies
When: Tuesday, October 20, 1998. 6:30pm-8:30pm
Who: Everyone (Academia, Government, Industry)

Abstract:

Code inspection is often discussed as a software quality or software process technique. Many people think of it as part of a large, bureaucratic process in which code passes through many steps and many hands before it sees the light of day.

Looking for Interesting Speakers

We are always looking for interesting speakers. If you'd like to speak at Boston SPIN, please review these criteria before sending us an abstract:

Speaker criteria:

1. The topic must be timely, an issue of concern to our membership.

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Meeting Summary

Notes from the September Meeting by Caroline Starita



"Riding The Web Tide – A Practical Approach to Institutionalizing Project Management"

**Speakers: Terie Rixman and
Unmesh Gundewar**

This presentation provided insight into the advantages of using the web to deploy project management processes to save time and money. Beginning with an overview of EDS' Wireless Division and its project management objectives, the briefing continued with project strategies for design and deployment of project management processes on their Intranet. The demonstration of the Project Model provided insight into the linkage of project management methodologies with processes and templates. The meeting concluded with a question and answer session dealing with the lessons learned while creating the process repository as well as configuration change and management issues.

Overview of EDS' Wireless Division by Terie Rixman, EDS

There are approximately 120 software professionals, including 15 project managers, in the Wireless Division, Communication Industry Group, in EDS. These are distributed among 13 organizations. The division objective was to solve the escalating communications and development problems experienced by the organizations. Increased internal communications needs conflicted with diminishing time for prioritizing and responding to corporate and project documentation and messages. Key metrics tracked are customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and employee attrition.

Project Strategy by Unmesh Gundewar, Consultant

Problem Assessment:

After conducting a project management (PM) assessment and gap analysis, the resulting strategy to close the gap was to build a process repository, construct a web site to deploy the PM process, and to provide mentorship.

An internal web site provides user-friendly solutions to several critical issues, the most significant being the following:

- Central bulletin board for news updates and project process documentation

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2. We want to hear about real-world topics. If you have an academic topic, we're interested in how it applies to the real world.
3. The topic should either explain how to *do* something, or bend our brains in another direction.
4. The presenter should be intimately involved with the "hows" of the thing that got done.
5. We are not interested in sales pitches.

If you have information you'd like us to hear, please send an abstract to Johanna Rothman, jr@jrothman.com. Or, contact Johanna at 781-641-4046.

We developed a speaker checklist so that none of us would have to rely on our short-term memories. Please use the checklist to prepare for your SPIN talk.

Speaker Checklist:

1. 2-paragraph abstract and speaker bio at least 60 days in advance to Johanna.
2. Speaker provides one copy of overheads for our library.
3. Speaker provides an electronic copy of the presentation for our web page on or before the day of the meeting.
4. If possible, provide 50-60 copies of overheads at the SPIN meeting. The attending members really appreciate this.

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.



- Ease of access and on-line hypertext link to reduce formal training requirements
- Online central repository to eliminate the “moving-target” challenge of project status and development documentation
- Single medium to expedite communications

Web Site Design:

Currently, the intranet provides EDS personnel with the process repository; processes (based on the SEI guidelines, e.g., purpose, metric, procedure, template); procedures; guidelines; templates; examples; policies; standards; change requests; process deployment; updates; assessments; Hall of Fame (monthly personnel recognition); conferences; coming events; cool sites; contacts; feedback; site info; and archives. The site contents are still expanding.

Deployment:

A web site architect implemented the design utilizing about 50% of his time over 3 weeks. The site incorporates no dead end pages and has no frames. The free form design uses photographs and animated .gif's to enliven usage. Feedback is encouraged to keep personnel involved and to facilitate two-way communication. The SEI process framework was used as the standard for the organization and for presenting process documents.

Implementation Metrics:

So far, measurable results include customer satisfaction index improvement by 19% and employee satisfaction improvement by 26%. A significant reduction in defects is an indicator of the improved software quality.

Configuration Management:

Configuration management is implemented to control process documents, with templates in either Word or Microsoft Project. The project workbook consists of 30 different components. Any project documentation not yet on the web is maintained in central repositories. There is a change review board for any process changes, and the mentor approach is used to communicate changes.



Feature Article

Book Review

by Carol Pilch, Senior Member of Technical Staff, GTE



Managing Technical People:

Innovation, Teamwork, and the Software Process

by Watts S. Humphrey, 1997, Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

Coming upon this book was a complete accident. I was developing a training module entitled “Leadership, Teamwork, and Organization”, which is a part of a 32- hour Software Project Management Course. I decided to see if there were any publications relevant to leadership and teamwork, so I dropped by the New England Book Fair. While checking out the business section, I found this book.

The book was originally intended to be a second edition of “Managing for Innovation: Leading Technical People”, which Humphrey wrote ten years ago. However, in revising the original work, additional chapters were added, particularly one on disciplined personal processes, and substantial additions were made to many of the existing chapters.

My first impression of this work was that it is extremely relevant to the challenges that software companies are facing. Specifically, it addresses the challenge to attract and retain skilled technical people, and in particular, software professionals in today’s marketplace. Also, software companies face the challenge of training people who have the ability to be innovative in a technological environment that is rapidly changing, as well as retaining skilled innovative people.

This book is organized into eight parts:

- The Manager as Leader
- Managing Technical and Professional People
- The Identification and Development of Talented People
- Innovation
- Innovative Teams
- The Organization
- Managing Change
- Strategies for Managing Change

While Humphrey is known for his leadership in the Software Engineering Institute and with the Software Capability Maturity Model, what he has to say is relevant to all technical people and organizations, not just software.

In a section on the importance of talent, Humphrey emphasizes that “Talented people are the organization’s most important asset. They originate the creative ideas, solve the key problems, and produce the most successful products.” He then goes on to say that the ability to attract and develop talent is fundamental to organizational survival: “An organization

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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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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/>

can address this problem only by attracting more and better engineers and scientists or by better utilizing those it already has. It is enormously difficult for an organization to make itself more attractive to the best people, however, because the most stimulating technical environments are most attractive, and this environment results from the caliber and reputation of the people who are already there." This means that the best groups attract the best people and thus become even more attractive. To become magnets for superior talent, technical organizations must both search for talent and make the best use of the talent they already have.

Although I expected the book to have a considerable amount of material on training technical people, it did not. Instead, there is emphasis on professional development both for managers and technical contributors. In a section entitled "Developing Technical Talent", the following is stated: "Young engineers and scientists are eager to learn and willing to work hard, but they rarely have the perspective to direct their energies efficiently. A structured development program based on each individual's needs and career plans can help them select the assignments that will build their skills and give them the perspective to avoid dead-end jobs. In addition to assisting the professionals, such programs also make the organization more attractive to talented people. The best engineers and scientists are understandably concerned about career development and will be more interested in an organization that shows equal concern."

The Management Team is explicitly identified as existing at all levels in an organization. Humphrey has this to say about management teams: "You cannot build a superior organization without an effective management team. If your management team does not measure up, you must make some changes.... Managers should also be role models for the people who report to them. Do they plan their work? Do they set personal goals? Do they track performance and meet commitments? If the managers do not have at least as mature a process as their people, improvement will be painfully slow or nonexistent."

On managing innovative teams, Humphrey points out that "Managers play the key role in determining their team's attitudes. The way managers assign the work, evaluate performance, and set the pace heavily influences the feelings of the members of their departments or groups. When managers ensure that each person feels personally valued, the team is most likely to coalesce into an effective working entity. If not, the group will likely split into factions with each competing for the boss's favor."

Everyone in a technical role who has direct reports, from first-line managers on up, should use the theses in this book as the criteria to determine how well they are doing in establishing an innovative work environment that maximizes the skill potential of direct reports. Managers at every level should have personal goals to lead an innovative, world class team that utilizes the team potential and attracts world class talent. Spending a few hours reading Managing Technical People will help you to set concrete objectives which meet these goals.

