

Atlanta SPIN

Software & Systems Process Improvement Network

The Atlanta SPINnaker

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Donna Simmons

“Ten Commandments of Testing”

By Donna Simmons

Although we had no stone tablets to distribute at our meeting on February 18, 2009, our speaker had some very important commandments to share with us. Donna Simmons has a long and distinguished career in software testing and has worked for a number of well known companies including Delta Airlines, AFLAC, and GTE. She holds CSQ and CST certifications and is a past president of the Atlanta Quality Assurance Association. Donna is also a current member of the Atlanta SPIN Board of Directors.

Reaching back to the 70’s, testing was little more than a demonstration of how the software worked. Moving forward, testing became a methodology for finding defects. More recently quality methods have driven defect prevention back earlier in the lifecycle. Testing now takes on all of its previous roles for managing quality

of the product with a strong focus on tools. Tools are not a silver bullet for preventing defects, so there must be a strong adherence to the ten commandments of testing to build in some confidence in the product as well as the process.

Requirements traceability is a key to a strong foundation for testing. Whether you have a tool or not, tracing requirements through engineering and on to acceptance testing must be done. Donna drew regularly on her past experience on the job, in both on-shore and off-shore situations, to emphasize her points. Next, Donna discussed the importance of a test plan including a strong measurements component. A very comprehensive test plan format was laid out for those interested in creating a plan of their own.

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Next Meeting: March 18, 2009



Quality Assurance in Agile Methodology

By Srikant Chellappa

Time: 6:00 PM—8:30 PM
 Location: La Quinta Inn & Suites,
 6260 Peachtree-Dunwoody Road,
 Atlanta, GA 30328

Boardwalk — The Roots of Atlanta SPIN

By: Fred Haigh, Vice-President, Atlanta SPIN and contributing writer to the SPINnaker

How many of you have ever searched for your roots? Alex Haley, in his book "Roots", did just that. The result was an extremely interesting and moving book that then became a movie and will live forever as a part of black history. The roots of the Atlanta SPIN were at risk of being lost to history until a few months ago when some of our board members started a discussion on the origins of our organization. After several emails and some other chatting and story telling by some of our founders who are still with the organization, we can now record some of this for posterity. Undoubtedly parts of this story will become permanent on our web site and parts will only remain in this newsletter article. For those of

you that are interested in Atlanta SPIN's history I encourage you to read on.

The earliest recollections of the origins of the Atlanta SPIN come from one of the founders, Larry Hyde. As he remembers it, "Actually, I met Bill Graham initially at an AUUG meeting in mid to late 1993 and we subsequently met numerous other times. We both were following the work of SEI and in mid 1994 Bill contacted SEI who sent us the charter template and suggested linking with a local college. Bill knew Mike [McCracken] of the GA Tech (GT) College of Computing - Bill was taking some courses and Mike had a keen interest in CMM and professionalizing "Software Engineering". Bill and a few others from Bell South, myself and Mike crafted the charter, notified SEI, set up a crude website on a GT server and

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Ten Commandments of Testing

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The third commandment warns us to not eliminate processes to save time or resources. Donna stressed the importance of following critical processes such as assignment of resources and the use of a RACI chart to identify critical roles for testing and other areas of the project. Additionally, she stressed performing all planned tests from unit tests all the way through to acceptance tests. The importance of configuration management was discussed and mirrored closely our January presentation on CM disasters.

The next few commandments included a restatement of the need for planning, adhering to change management processes and scheduling and monitoring the testing as it is performed. Traceability of tests to configuration items was stressed as a way to tie things together. Adequate resources were mentioned as another critical success factor.

Finally, you must have a defect management process in place to record and track defects until they are

repaired. It does no good to identify a defect if you can't reproduce it, track it back through the repair process, and test it again. This loop must be until all defects are fixed. Again Donna stressed the need for effective and meaningful metrics to track the progress of testing. You should always know where you are in the testing cycle and be able to show, through metrics, how much has been done and how much is left to be completed.

Finally, Donna told the group to be sure to celebrate the completion of testing. It is very important at the end of testing and the delivery of the product to reward the team for all of their hard work. Very often it is the testers who have their schedule reduced through no fault of their own. Working hard through the night to test software is a very lonely job and a reason to celebrate is well deserved and appreciated by your testing team.

A very active Q&A session followed the presentation and Donna stayed after the close of the meeting to answer additional questions.

Boardwalk — The Roots of Atlanta SPIN (continued)

set up a special account for managing funds with GT acting as our non-profit host. Bell South kicked in \$2,500 to help us get started. I recall we had a few meetings in late 1994 but with almost no attendance except for us "founders". In 1995, Bill asked me to serve as Vice-chair which I did for 2 years before becoming Chair in 1997."

Jean Swank, currently with Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI), recalls, "I've located the hardcopies of Atlanta SPIN documentation that I was entrusted with as Chairperson. It looks like Bill Graham of Southern Bell initiated communications with SEI in July 1994 and meetings were originally held at GT with Mike McCracken, a professor at GT, acting as Treasurer and coordinating meeting support at GT. They conducted monthly meetings."

Julie Stein, formerly from Bell South and now with CGI, was also one of the pioneers of Atlanta SPIN as were a number of Bell South folks. From 1997 to 1999 Atlanta SPIN worked diligently onward. Julie had moved to Birmingham. From there she helped Larry recruit the Birmingham and Huntsville SPINs to partner with Atlanta SPIN. After the SEPG conference, our membership grew and the quality of our board and subsequently the meetings improved dramatically.

Larry Hyde initiated the move have Atlanta SPIN to host the 1999 SEPG conference. Larry drafted a proposal with the aid of several others in the group, including Julie Stein and the Birmingham and Huntsville SPINs. The success of SEPG 99, led SEI from that time onward to use the multiple SPINs model in a similar fashion. Each SPIN is responsible for 1 or more tracks as we had pioneered in 99. As Larry says, "For SEPG 99, many folks including Bruce, Abi, Jean and even Mike McCracken along with Julie and Davis from Huntsville and many others worked with Larry to deliver the program that had more than a 20% increase in attendees over previous years." There was also a large showing from the international community.

Bruce Duncil, our President for 2009, recalls, "My first meeting was Jan 96 on the Tech campus. Things were already in full swing with a large BellSouth contingent on the board at that time."

Abi Salimi, our President for several years including 2008, was asked to recount his early participation in Atlanta SPIN. "I started with the Atlanta SPIN in 1998. Since then, I have served as Program Chair, Vice President, and President of this professional organization. I was fortunate to be part of the 1999 Software Engineering Process Group (SEPG) conference held in Atlanta. Southern Polytechnic University (SPSU) and Atlanta SPIN also offered a joint one day forum in 1999 when Watts Humphrey was the keynote speaker, <http://cse.spsu.edu/colloquia/talks/humphrey1.html>.

A quick review of the original charter reveals some interesting things about our organization. Even with our humble beginnings, our mission statement has always contained some key points:

- Transfer Process Improvement knowledge to all participants
- Improve software productivity
- Promote process capability improvement and organizational process maturity
- Promote cooperation between industry, academia, and government with respect to process improvement

So there you have it. Starting from a few conversations in 1993, a hard working and dedicated core of individuals started the local chapter of SPIN in Atlanta which is now a strong and well respected organization. All of the board members, past and present, have given their time to the organization for free. Very often the board member's only reward is in knowing that the membership keeps coming back monthly for more. All board members are very mindful of the services that Atlanta SPIN provides to its members.

In the winter 2009 issue of the SEI newsletter, Shane McGraw interviewed Abi Salimi, then President of Atlanta SPIN. If you would like to see a copy of that article follow this link to the SEI newsletter site: <http://www.sei.cmu.edu/collaborating/spins/newsletter.html>.

Atlanta SPIN Board of Directors

Director	Role
Bruce Duncil	President
Fred Haigh	Vice President
Mike Sweeney	Treasurer
Bill Reister	Secretary
Scott Banks	Director, Membership
Tarun Talwar	Director, Programs
Gray Karnes	Director, Marketing
Donna Simmons	Director, Sponsorship
Vivian Viverito	Director, Technology Services
Stephen Burlingame	Director, Logistics
Abi Salimi	Director at Large
Larry Hyde	Director at Large

The Atlanta SPINnaker
Email: newsletter@atlantaspin.org

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And our many Contributing Members!

Process Improvement Sites:**Software Engineering Information Repository**

<http://seir.sei.cmu.edu>, has over 30,000 registered users and is a forum used to contribute and exchange information about software engineering improvement activities, including CMMI.

The CMMI Process Improvement Yahoo! discussion group

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cmmi_process_improvement/ is a forum used to contribute and exchange ideas about CMMI-based improvement.

BSCW Shared Workspace <https://bscw.sei.cmu.edu/pub/bscw.cgi/0/79783> is a forum used to contribute and exchange CMMI-related materials.

Information courtesy of SEI Customer Relations. Find out more about SEI Membership online at www.sei.cmu.edu/membership customer-relationships@sei.cmu.edu

About Atlanta SPIN, Incorporated

www.atlantaspin.org

The Atlanta SPIN organization was chartered in 1994. This group has been a force for software process improvement in the Atlanta area since then. The organization has a growing membership list that currently numbers 850+ members. The group typically meets every third Wednesday of the month. Our meetings typically attract audiences of 40 – 50 people. These meetings provide a forum for like-minded people, interested in learning from others and sharing their own experiences. There is time allowed before and after the meeting for networking among the participants, including a review from the audience of any job openings that are available. The Board, through its work with Sponsors, ensures that food and drinks are also available at no cost to the membership. Atlanta SPIN is a 501C3 non-profit corporation. Your contributions may be tax deductible and qualify for corporate matching contributions from your company.