



Atlanta SPIN

Software Process Improvement Network



Kevin Schaan

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The Atlanta SPINaker

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“Good Answer, Son”



Kevin Schaan Opening the Meeting

Kevin Schaan of Borland, an Atlanta SPIN sponsor, gave a fast-paced intensive discussion on Requirements Management to a packed house (77 attendees) at our April meeting.

Kevin opened with a “war story” from one of the earliest assessments he led in a military organization. Proud of the findings in the assessment, he was taken aback when, at the end of the finding, the General walked up to his podium and said: “Young man, this is nice but you haven’t told me anything I didn’t already know.” Kevin, feeling obliged to respond for his team, forced out “You mean you knew that all these things needed attention, and you haven’t done anything about it?” Silence! All eyes, including Kevin’s, focused on the General and his slow walk back to the podium. Finally, a smile on his face: “Good answer, son.”

Again and again during his presentation, Kevin

addressed the “so what” question – what do you need to do as an organization or a team, given that problematic situations exist within your requirements process and its execution in practice.

Kevin started off by discussing Requirements Management. He noted that many organizations are not very good at prioritizing the requirements/needs they get from Marketing and the system’s Users. Often, everything is highest priority. Kevin mentioned that he has used conjoint analysis techniques to get such a discussion off of square one, with it being critical that the requirements suppliers own the answer.

Next Kevin differentiated between Requirements Verification (building it right) versus Requirements Validation (building the right thing.) He stressed that V&V needs to be done regularly through the project life cycle, not, as is so often the case, at the end of the development cycle. He mentioned various techniques (prototyping, story boarding, and use cases) as mechanisms that can be adopted to address validation.

Finally Kevin then discussed Change Management, the “killer of all projects” if not handled properly up front, and then generalized the discussion to Requirements Engineering.

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What's Next? - May 16th

Scott Banks - Research Engineer

Georgia Tech Research Institute

Problem Reporting is not a Problem—It’s an Opportunity

Kevin Schaan Highlights - continued

His emphasis here was the importance of using terminology that was consistent within all projects in a company, and ideally with the Industry's use as well. In his experience, this has been a problem that really gets in the way of adopting a consistent, repeatable approach. In the process of doing this, he also addressed "requirements gathering," noting that this goes more smoothly if a company has Business Analysts versus Developers doing the requirements capture. He did note that the best BA's are senior enough to understand both the business and the technology so that they can drive the project to a "right" solution that properly balances the forces at play here.



A view from the back of a "full house" at Atlanta SPIN's April meeting

In all of the above discussion, Kevin repeatedly noted that there are different tools, techniques, templates that can be adopted, depending on what best fits the specific project or company environment. It's important to recognize that this is not a "one size fits all" world. He also stressed the importance of placing "\$"s on record early on so that upfront investments can be justified (or not) before a project starts seriously moving ahead.

Kevin also discussed the various factors that are at play in causing requirements to change. The importance of differentiating between a customer/user providing a design versus a problem statement was covered. The challenges of dealing with volatile technology and functionality not originally fully understood can be very challenging. Kevin noted that he sees the biggest issue in this arena, disconnects between the Business and IT, occurring more and more frequently as projects with greater and greater complexity are pursued. Requirements play a crucial role here, because if they are not articulated well early and managed thoughtfully, it is easy for "bad blood" to develop between these two sides.

At CMMI Level 2, the prime focus is on Managing Requirements. Kevin highlighted five major activities in this regard, diving again and again into details that are important for success. Some key observations included the criticality that all stakeholders are engaged and genuinely communicating with one another; the importance that project impacts on other projects are truly understood and accepted; the frequency with which requirements baselining is not properly done or even understood; the utility of traceability throughout the development cycle, from requirements through test; the importance of having the true system users engaged in the requirements process versus proxies for them; and that the resources critical for project success are genuinely available. This last topic then led to a discussion of risk management, and the importance of how risks can be but often are not proactively monitored and mitigated as the project proceeds. Kevin noted that in CMMI, requirements traceability had been "moved" from Level 3 to Level 2 given its criticality to success.

At CMMI Level 3, Kevin noted that the focus was on developing and validating Customer Requirements and Product, Product Component and Interface Requirements. He noted the importance of organizational standards and templates at this level. He also noted that it is important to capture "Customer Requirements" in the Customer's language and to ensure that developers are engaged in this process, so that tradeoffs can be assessed early in the project cycle. He noted that Interface Requirements tend to be the trickiest area to get right for many organizations. There was then some considerable discussion on Requirements Analysis & Validation. The importance of being able to describe how the entire product or system will operate in terms its user can understand becomes a primary driver, with scenarios, often Use Cases, being more and more commonly used to ensure this. The criticality of all stakeholders actually participating, and proactively dealing with situations where this is not the case, was noted. This ability to reassess effort and schedule during a project at point where the User Requirements, the High-Level Design, and a more Detailed Design serves a project and organization extremely well.

Towards the end of the presentation, Kevin focused on Requirements Gathering in particular, and working with your User Constituency in the proper way. Getting the "right set" of reviewers to work as partners throughout the verification and validation efforts is a key for success. As part of this, it is important to ensure that the purpose and key attendees for all reviews are socialized at project start with up front commitment. Furthermore, an assessment of candidate techniques and guidelines for what approaches should be adopted when can bring great value. And finally, having measures that enable a project to know the growth of its requirements over time enables it to meaningfully manage risk and change based on data versus hopes.

More information on Kevin's talk can be found in his slides, which are available at <http://www.atlantaspin.org/meetinginfo.htm>

SEI News: SEPG a Hit with Members

Over 1,500 people attended the SEPG '007 Conference, which was held this year in Austin, Texas, at the Austin Convention Center. Nearly 350 of those attendees were SEI Members!

Member highlights included the 2007 Member Assembly and Luncheon which featured a Q & A session with SEI Fellow Watts Humphrey, the VIP Networking Social to kick things off on Sunday evening and a VIP Reception for members and partners on Monday evening. Also, three SEI Members were presented with the 4th Annual SEI Member Awards for Contributor, Advocate and Representative by SEI Director and CEO Dr. Paul Nielsen. The award ceremony took place during the Opening Remarks of the General Session. The following members were recognized:

- Jeffrey Schwalb, from Navair, received the "Outstanding Representative" award
- Kathy Gallucci, from P3I, Incorporated, received the "Outstanding Advocate" award
- Rakesh Radhakrishnan, from Sun Microsystems, received the "Outstanding Contributor" award

The VIP Hospitality Lounge was available all week for members and partners to network, meet each other as well as SEI technical staff, win prizes or just as a quiet place to get a few things done.

If you participated in any of the conference's member events we'd be thrilled to get your valuable feedback. Please submit comments and suggestions to customer-relations@sei.cmu.edu

The SEI Membership Program would like to thank all members who attended SEPG this year. See you in Tampa Bay for SEPG

SEI News: Announcing CMMI "Beyond V1.2" Workshops

[CMMI version 1.2 was released in August 2006](#) and contained numerous improvements designed to correct some minor deficiencies in v1.1 and greatly improve the integrity of both the model and the appraisal method. To help start the initial planning for what lies beyond CMMI v1.2, the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA), with technical support from the SEI, is conducting a series of workshops around the world to gather input and ideas from experienced CMMI users and practitioners. There are two major goals for the CMMI "Beyond V1.2" Workshops:

- determine ways to make the model less complex while still preserving integrity
- construct alternative appraisal techniques that would be less onerous while still preserving integrity

For more information about the workshops, including requirements for attending and registration instructions, see the [NDIA Web site](#).

SEI News: New Blog from Watts Humphrey!

Watts Humphrey has started a new blog where he plans to discuss current issues and invite comments and suggestions from SEI Partners and other users. The BLOG can be found at http://tspusergroup.org/watts_up.

SEPG '007 at a Glance

The Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute (SEI) hosted the 19th SEPG conference in Austin, Texas, March 26-29, 2007. The sessions were much expanded compared to previous years, addressing:

Acquisition Agile Systems Appraisals Benefits and Impact Cutting Edge Research Frameworks
Technologies Deployment and Adoption Domains Getting Started High Maturity Measurement and
Analysis Models Standards

More than fifteen hundred professionals with a stake in improving the development, acquisition and support of software and systems attended from all over the world.

The SEI is the author and steward of the CMMI (Capability Maturity Model Integration) product suite that also includes the SCAMPI (Standard CMMI Appraisal Method for Process Improvement) appraisal method. More than 500 participants were SEI authorized assessors involved in SCAMPI appraisals. There were also numerous representatives of the companies and organizations actively using the SEI improvement frameworks.

Similar to previous conferences, SEI, through its partner companies and other individuals, showcased its work in transitioning process improvement technologies to the global community. The goal of that work remains the same: improve product and service quality - thus reducing cost and time-to-market - by improving the methods, tools and skills of the individuals and teams.

There were, however, two major differences in this year's conference, namely SEI updates to CMMI and SCAMPI, and SEI clarification of high-maturity practices.

CMMI/SCAMPI Updates: CMMI and SCAMPI versions 1.1 were initially released in 2001. The first major update of both models (i.e., CMMI for Development, v1.2, and the respective appraisal method, SCAMPI v1.2) was released in August 2006. This update addressed a large body of accumulated change requests as well as lessons from field experience. All CMMI appraisals that will be done after August 2007 must be performed against this latest version of the product suite. CMMI constellations (i.e., models), one for acquisition and one for services, are in the early stages of deployment and hence are still works in progress.

High Maturity Practices: CMMI requires that you set your own performance objectives; determine if they are met; and take the necessary corrective actions when they are not achieved. CMMI High Maturity Practices (i.e., CMMI Level 4-5 practices) include a) determining the needs of customers, b) establishing improvement objectives to address these customer needs, and c) using statistical and other quantitative methods to plan, monitor and control progress toward those objectives. These objectives must be addressed within an environment that supports continuous improvement. The CMMI model, however, provides little quantitative insight into these objectives. As a result, there is considerable controversy regarding the appropriate process and product performance measures that should be adopted and the appropriate statistical and probability models that should be used to predict future results.

During the past year, SEI increased its scrutiny of individual results for high-maturity appraisals. In some cases, SEI has rejected individual appraisal results and de-authorized some Lead Appraisers in situations where the SEI method and model requirements were subsequently determined as not having been met.

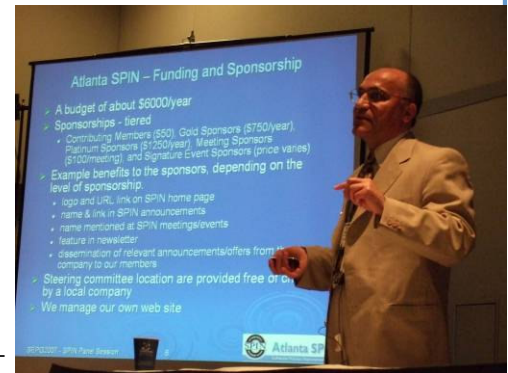
This year's conference, thus, provided SEI the opportunity to begin an on-going process of re-baselining the community on use of its evolving product suite.

Contributed by Abi Salimi, Atlanta SPIN President; Bruce Duncil, Principal Consultant, Alderon Consulting, Inc.; Shane McGraw, SEI SPIN Coordinator

Atlanta SPIN @ SEPG '007 !!!

The Conference also focused on Software Process Improvement Networks (SPINs), a topic that has recently received more attention from the SEI. Atlanta SPIN had recommended a panel discussion on this topic, and its proposal was accepted by the conference organizers. Atlanta SPIN led the organization of this panel session.

This session, entitled “*How to Start and Sustain an Effective Local Charter of SPIN*,” was conducted on Tuesday, March 27th. The panel consisted of the Presidents of the Atlanta, Great Lakes, Philadelphia and Austin SPINs, four of the most successful SPIN chapters. The panelists shared their experiences; discussed lessons learned; and disseminated a rich collection of reference material, including charters, guidelines, templates, etc. to the panel attendees. This material is now available on the SEI web site, <http://www.sei.cmu.edu/collaborating/spins/spins.start.html>, accessible to everyone across the world. The panel presentations are also available at <http://www.sei.cmu.edu/collaborating/spins/pdfs/sepg-pres.pdf>.



Abi Salimi presenting at the SEPG '007 Conference session on SPINs

There were a number of observations that followed from this session:

The SEI is seriously interested in promoting SPIN chapters and supporting their activities. Some specific examples include:

- 1) Providing more of their technical staff to speak at SPIN meetings;
- 2) Hosting a speaker repository for SPINs to access;
- 3) Providing discounts on SEI Membership (DONE);
- 4) Possible pilot opportunities from the SEI.

Some additional action items the SEI took from the session included:

- 1) The creation of a SPIN Wiki which allows users to add and edit SPIN-related content; and
- 2) SEI-recognized accreditation for SPIN Point of Contacts.

The panel involved participants from four different SPIN chapters. It was interesting how common the experiences and challenges were between these various geographically disbursed chapters. We learned of the successful experience of the Great Lakes SPIN with its use of brochures for regular meetings. This is something we may look to emulate here within the Atlanta SPIN.

Several SPIN-related activities were also held during the Conference:

On Monday evening, March 26th, Shane McGraw and Deen Blash of SEI hosted a *SPIN Birds-of-a Feather (BoF) Session*. Ten SPIN points-of-contact participated in this BoF and exchanged information on how different SPINs are run and ideas on ways the SEI can do a better job supporting SPIN chapters.

During the Conference, the SEI conducted *Peer-to-Peer Daily Lunch Topics*. On Thursday, March 29th, the topic chosen was *How to Establish a SPIN*. Eleven attendees exchanged ideas on getting a SPIN started and on ways to increase information sharing.

Abi Salimi Videographed at SEPG '007!

Next year, SEI will be celebrating the 20th anniversary of the SEPG conference, and has started publicizing the event. The SEI Public Relations Office had enlisted a videography team to help it capture the activities and events of SEPG '007, ranging from keynote speakers to the exhibit hall opening to individual interviews. As part of this effort, Dr. Abi Salimi, the Atlanta SPIN President, was selected to participate in a one-on-one interview to discuss topics such as:

- The importance of process improvement
- The reason for attending this and other SEPG conferences
- How has process improvement affected your organization?
- Your relationship with the SEI

Editor's Note: Spotlight on Our Sponsors will return next month.

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Atlanta SPIN Sponsors—They Make Our Efforts Possible!



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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-relations@sei.cmu.edu

About Atlanta SPIN

The Atlanta SPIN organization was chartered in 1991. 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.

Ron Wojcik, editor