

# Atlanta SPIN

Software & Systems Process Improvement Network

The Atlanta SPINnaker

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**Bruce Duncil**

## Why Lessons Learned Aren't—And What You Can Do About It!

**Bruce Duncil**—President and Principal Consultant Alderon Consulting, Inc.

Our chapter draws extraordinary speakers from all over; the easy access to travelers afforded by Atlanta's position as the travel hub of the Southeast is a definite advantage when it comes to attracting talented individuals to our meetings. Having said that, it's always nice to find someone close to home to come spend the evening with us. February's speaker was one of our own, Bruce Duncil; Founder and Principal Consultant for Alderon Consulting, SEI authorized Lead Appraiser, and member of your Atlanta SPIN Board of Directors.

Bruce brought a wealth of education and experience to the table. Having spent more than two decades working across the software development lifecycle, he's been in a position to see how learning happens across our industry. As a SEI lead appraiser Bruce has more than fifty appraisals under his belt. He was well qualified to address his topic: "Why Lessons Aren't Learned".

The presentation kicked off with a look at the way things typically happen in a lessons learned session. You know, the attempt at getting to the heart of the problem that finally gives way to giving everyone a pat on the back and letting them get back to work. Next Bruce took a humorous look at "The Top Ten Reasons Lessons Aren't Learned," David Letterman style.

Using numerous real life examples, Bruce suggested that the reason that these meetings don't have a positive effect has more to do with the process surrounding the lessons learned than any other factor. He walked us through an alternative approach to the much-dreaded post mortem: a process for collecting project experiences and looking at them from a process improvement mindset. His EPPI framework – short for Experiential Process Performance Information offered a different, non-confrontational take on how to approach

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## Next Meeting: March 19, 2008

### Reinventing IT Operations as a Managed Services Organization

Presented by Tom Guthrie  
Vice President of Information Technology Operations

Time: 6:00 PM—8:30 PM

Location: La Quinta Inn & Suites, 6260 Peachtree-Dunwoody Road,  
Atlanta, GA 30328

## On the Boardwalk: Jean Swank—Co-Secretary



The Boardwalk is a regular feature of the SPINnaker. Our board members take this opportunity to give you some insight into their views about being on the Atlanta SPIN Board of Directors.

### **What experience do you have in the software development lifecycle or technology?**

I have over twenty-five years of experience in all phases of system and software development as a software engineer and project manager.

### **What process improvement related activities have you personally been involved with?**

I have led the process improvement program in my organization for the past ten years, including the initiative that resulted in the organization achieving the Software Engineering

Institute's Software-Capability Maturity Model (CMM) Level 3 rating in June of 2003. In addition to my experience with Software-CMM, I have been trained in the Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) model and as an ISO 9001:2000 Lead Auditor. I have been a board member for the Atlanta Software Process Improvement Network (SPIN) in the past. I have developed and implemented the quality assurance program in my organization. I and my team continue to improve this program based on insight gained in the implementation of these processes. In my roles of Director of Process and Quality and Process Improvement and Quality Assurance Manager I am responsible for managing process improvement and effective quality assurance in a diverse development environment at the Georgia Tech Research Institute.

### **How did you get involved in Atlanta SPIN?**

Georgia Tech was one of the initial sponsors of the Atlanta SPIN organization and when I became involved in process improvement in the mid-1990s I decided to join that group.

### **What benefits have you personally derived from participation in SPIN?**

I was part of the SPIN group that was successful in bringing the 1999 SEPG conference to Atlanta. That experience included writing the proposal, planning the conference, being the Tutorial Chair for the conference, and participating in the 1998 SEPG conference as a Moderator and Reviewer. This experience along with the opportunity to network with other Atlanta SPIN members has been valuable to me in my career.

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## Why Lessons Learned Aren't—And What You Can Do About It! Continued

the learning portion of a project. The key to this method is to follow your process, perform an activity, have an experience, and make your observations. The presentation included guidance to collect EPPI that will be both useful and used.

Having a database and a method for collecting and analyzing that data makes the whole process of lessons learned beneficial to the organization. Finally, reporting the results to management in a fashion that allows for improvement actions to be planned and executed was stressed.

The presentation closed with another top ten list. – Pitfalls to avoid with your EPPI implementation. Listed

among the pitfalls were: cultural obstacles, bad business objectives, failure to analyze results, misinterpretation of lessons, and failure to plan the lessons learned activities.

Expertly fielding questions from the always lively SPIN audience, Bruce closed the session and offered to take additional questions after the meeting.

If you missed this meeting you missed a great presentation with real life experiences and some very practical advice on running lessons learned sessions in your organization. Bruce's slides are available on the Atlanta SPIN web site for your use. If you apply these techniques, do drop him a line and tell him how it worked for you.

## New SPIN Logo



A few months ago the SEI initiated a new SPIN logo for use by all the SPINs across the world. Being one of the frontrunners in the SPIN community, Atlanta SPIN has jumped onboard with the new logo. You may have seen the new logo at the top of the web site home page at the beginning of the year. Now, the SPINnaker has fallen into step and updated the masthead of the newsletter to match the web site.

There are several things to note about the new logo. One of the things that jumps out at you is the bright orange wheel in a wheel over the “IN” in SPIN. The intent was to give a sense of motion. You don’t get much motion in a static picture but SEI did the best job they could with the concept. We are trying to get a graphics animator to give the wheels a little push and

maybe come up with an actual spinning set of wheels. Continuous Improvement is the name of that game.

Another feature of the new logo is the expanded scope statement beneath the bar. “Software & Systems Process Improvement Network” is the new scope. The addition of the word “Systems” is intended to tie in to the full scope statement of the CMMI. As you may recall, CMMI represents the integration of the Software CMM and the EIA 731 (Systems Engineering CMM) and the IPPD CMM. In fact, when you take the Introduction to CMMI v 1.2 course you get full coverage of both software and systems (think hardware) material. You also get a full exposure to the Staged Representation and the Continuous Representation.

Our Board of Directors spent several weeks discussing how to put all of the elements together into a logo that was pleasing to the eye and compatible with the web site and newsletter. We kept the orange from the SEI site and spiced things up with blue lettering (much zippier than the SEI gray). We hope you like the new look and will be happy to hear your comments about the new logo.

## On the Boardwalk: (Continued)

### What motivated you to join the Atlanta SPIN Board?

I have a systems engineering focus as well as software engineering experience that I think is important to the Atlanta SPIN.

### What do you hope to achieve by participating on the Atlanta SPIN Board?

I hope that I can have a positive impact on bringing another process improvement (SEPG) conference to Atlanta.

### What are some of your other accomplishments?

I co-authored a chapter on “Software Quality Assurance on Small Projects” in the 4th edition of the Handbook of Software Quality Assurance. Additionally, I have published papers and presented at several annual national conferences on process development, software development, testing, and

systems engineering. These conferences include the Software Engineering Process Group (SEPG) Conference, the NDIA CMMI Technology Conference, the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) Systems Engineering Conference, STARWEST, Practical Software Quality & Testing (PSQT) Conference, and the Better Software Conference. The topics include implementing quality assurance on small projects, configuration management, developing system engineering processes, and implementing an effective peer review process. I also coauthored the paper “*Let’s Do It All Over Again! Ruin Your Reputation Through Configuration Mismanagement,*” which was presented at the 2005 Better Software Conference and earned the conference’s Best Paper Award.

I have a Bachelor of Science in Information and Computer Science and a Masters of Science in Management of Technology, both from Georgia Tech.

**Atlanta SPIN Board of Directors**

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**Contributors to this issue:**

- Will Bracker

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<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/](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  
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[customer-relations@sei.cmu.edu](mailto:customer-relations@sei.cmu.edu)

**About Atlanta SPIN, Incorporated**

[www.atlantaspin.org](http://www.atlantaspin.org)

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.