

Atlanta SPIN

Software & Systems Process Improvement Network

The Atlanta SPINnaker

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Michael Nearman

Overcoming Process Improvement Inertia

Michael Nearman, AGSI

How many process improvement consultants does it take to change a light bulb? One, but only if the light bulb really wants to change. This may sound like a silly way to introduce a topic like organizational change but it does get the message across. Our speaker in June was Michael Nearman from AGSI a local consulting company and sponsor of Atlanta SPIN. His topic “Overcoming Process Improvement Inertia” was one that has been requested by many of our members. One of the main messages was that organizations that change really have to want to change from the top down.

Mike started the discussion by relating two stories from early in his career of over 30 years as a change agent. There are plenty of good practices available to be implemented. One of the most difficult things to achieve is getting organizations to **actually change** their behavior.

One of the acronyms that Mike focused on was DICE: Duration, Integrity,

Commitment, and Effort. These are some of the key factors from a Harvard Business Review case on implementing change. The duration of the change project is best dealt with using frequent communications such as status reports that actually show progress. Integrity involves trust: top management must trust the project team to deliver success. In order to do that management must be willing to make the investment of putting its best people on the project. Commitment is the natural extension of that trust. Both management and the staff must commit and communicate to be successful. Finally, effort must be expended and accounted for. Mike’s recommendation was that no more than 10% of a person’s time can be expected to be devoted to the project. Schedules must be adjusted accordingly.

Mike shared a risk assessment gauge for estimating the likelihood of success of the change project. The DICE elements were broken down and some measures applied to

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Next Meeting: July 16, 2008

**Lessons Learned and Best Practices in Process Improvement
A Project Manager’s Perspective**

Lisa A. Grant, MBA PMP

Time: 6:00 PM—8:30 PM

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

Spotlight on Sponsors: Southern Polytechnic State University



The Spotlight is a regular feature of the SPINnaker. This feature helps you understand who our sponsors are. Maybe you or your company would like to [sponsor Atlanta SPIN](#).

Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU – <http://www.spsu.edu>), located in Marietta in the Metro Atlanta area, is a place where students are educated for life and for leadership in an increasingly technological world.

SPSU's School of Computing and Software Engineering (CSE – <http://cse.spsu.edu>) seeks to empower individuals and organizations to improve the quality of life for people around the globe through the application of computing and information technologies through its educational programs, its research and scholarship, and its service to the community. Its mission is to serve the community by equipping its students and graduates with the skills and knowledge to apply computing, software engineering techniques and information technologies to solve today's real-world problems and face tomorrow's challenges. To this end, CSE offers a range of first-rate undergraduate and graduate degrees and professional programs and engages in high-quality scholarship, research and development in all aspects of computing and its applications.

CSE works towards achieving its mission through its two departments, the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering (<http://csws.spsu.edu>) and the Department of Information Technology (<http://it.spsu.edu>).

The Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering offers BS and BA degrees in Computer Science, a BS in Software Engineering, an MS in Computer Science, an MS in Software Engineering, and several credit-based undergraduate and graduate

certificate programs. The Department of Information Technology offers a BS in Information Technology, a BAS in Information Technology (allowing a transition path for some students from technical colleges), an MS in Information Technology, and several credit-based undergraduate and graduate certificate programs.

CSE prides itself in the quality of its programs, its student-centeredness, and its ability to cater to the educational needs of working adults. It offers many of its courses in the evening and is starting to deliver an increasing number of its programs both online and face-to-face. Thus, the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering offers two credit-based certificate programs - the Graduate Transition Certificate in Computer Science (GTCCS) and the Graduate Certificate in Software Engineering (GCSWE) - fully online and other programs and is considering additional programs for online offering. The Department of Information Technology participates in the WebBSIT consortium, which offers a fully online BSIT program, and allows students to complete its MS program in Information Technology online. More information about CSE's online programs is available at <http://cse.spsu.edu/OnlinePrograms/index.shtml>.

For more information on CSE and its programs, please contact Dr Venu Dasigi, Chair of the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering, by email vdasigi@spsu.edu or by phone on 678-915-5559, or Dr Han Reichgelt, Dean of the School, at hreichge@spsu.edu or on 678-915-7399.

Overcoming Process Improvement Inertia (Continued)

each. The keys to success were keeping the review time duration low, having a respected leader, high levels of commitment from management and staff, and keeping the level of effort low.

Some additional keys to success were discussed including staff participation. Everyone needs to contribute to defining goals, measuring progress, and holding accountability for progress. Coaching and counseling from the change agents was also discussed as a key success factor.

Finally as an example of implementing change, Mike

discussed three ways of introducing a project management office. The Weather Man (pointing out problems but having no responsibility for fixing anything) was not the ideal. The Control Tower approach was held up as better but still fell down when it degenerates into a "Process Cop" organization. The best approach was seen as the Facilitator & Helper model. While it costs more to get going, the acceptance by the organization is much greater.

The meeting wrapped up and was followed by a lively question and answer period.

On the Boardwalk: Bruce Duncil — Sponsorship

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?

Like most of us, I began coding and testing software in college. Most of my career, however, was spent in roles spanning operations, discipline engineering, functional management and project management. My experience spans the product life cycle, cradle to grave.

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

Over the past dozen years, I've used engineering, management, and process improvement best practices as both an internal as well as an external consultant. I've staffed and managed process improvement teams and guided initiatives as well as provided consulting, training and benchmarking. As a professional consultant, I focus on innovating solutions that improve client profitability.

How did you get involved in Atlanta SPIN?

I've been attending SPIN meetings since 1996. The meetings are an excellent networking opportunity and the presentations

generally provide sound tips and techniques that enable improved business performance.

What benefits have you personally derived from participation in SPIN?

Certainly the people I've met and friends I've made have meant a lot personally. The presentations invariably provide different perspectives and opportunities for continued learning. Working on the committee to bring SEI's SEPG '99 conference to Atlanta, as well as my participation on the board this year, provides me professional satisfaction.

What motivated you to join the Atlanta SPIN Board?

In a nutshell, it's tied to my company's vision. SPIN presents a unique opportunity to engage Atlanta business leaders in pursuing performance that will ensure that our firms remain preeminent in the global marketplace.

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

I'm privileged to work with the other board members in the marketing and sponsorship areas. By increasing the business community's participation and involvement in SPIN, we hope to strengthen professional ties, promote best practices, build sound leadership for the future, and help ensure a brighter tomorrow for us all.

Any other comments?

Global competition, expanding technological complexity, and an increasingly sophisticated work force are just a few factors driving tomorrow's challenges. SPIN is an integral resource for each of us to master our challenges and achieve success.

Upcoming Speakers

In the next few months we have secured some terrific speakers. Here are some of the confirmed speakers for the next few months:

- August — Fred Jewell, Accenture — “Applied Influence”
- October — A Special Halloween treat (no tricks) for our October meeting “Process Horror Stories” — We need your horror stories for this panel / story telling session. Send your ideas and experiences to Newsletter@atlantaspin.org and you may be selected to share your story with the group
- November — Iraj Hirmanpour — “Testing Capability Model (TCM) - *What Is It, Why is It Needed, How Is It Used?*”.

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www.informit.com/usergroups

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, Incorporated

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.