

Atlanta SPIN

Software & Systems Process Improvement Network

The Atlanta SPINnaker

August 2008

Volume 3, Issue 8



Lisa Grant

Lessons Learned and Best Practices in Process Improvement

A Project Manager's Perspective

Lisa A. Grant, MBA PMP

Eight words guaranteed to cause a sinking feeling in the stomach of an experienced software developer;

“Project’s over, time for our lessons learned meeting!”

Lisa Grant took and met the challenge of speaking to the Atlanta SPIN chapter on “Lessons Learned – Best Practices” at our July meeting.

Lisa is a fabulous presenter – imagine with me for a moment, a talk on project post-mortems punctuated by *laughter*. The hour flew by, with crystal clear examples illustrated with engaging anecdotes.

The stage was set with a quick Q&A session with the audience, a show of hands and some quick descriptions of lessons learned sessions that we’d experienced in our careers.

“Happens at the end of the project; too late to do any good”

“No one cares, time to move on”

... and my particular favorite,

“Group blamestorming sessions”

Working forward from the questions, she quickly outlined how lessons learned sessions are widely implemented today – single meetings held at the end of a project and quickly forgotten or ignored.

Lisa advanced the premise that the lessons learned need to be treated as an ongoing process; a way of constantly assessing and improving project execution. She suggested that the

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Next Meeting: August 20, 2008



Fred Jewell

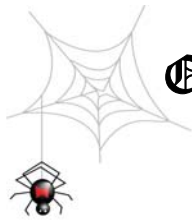
Applied Influence

Fred Jewell, Accenture

Time: 6:00 PM—8:30 PM

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

Atlanta SPIN



October Horror Stories Presentation Guidelines



In the October meeting, you will have an opportunity to share your personal project horror story with the rest of our members. An Atlanta SPIN board member will moderate a panel of volunteer presenters. If you haven't already volunteered and wish to present, please contact a board member in person or via e-mail posted on the Atlanta SPIN web site. We have allocated 5-7 minutes for each presenter. Following the presentations, there will be Q&A, commiseration and lessons learned discussions. Besides having fun, the presenter should cover the following four areas.

Problem

Describe the problem. Was it technical, resource,

requirements, etc.

Action

What actions did you or the team initiate? Did the project continue on the death march or were steps taken to salvage the project?

Resolution

What was the final resolution of the problem? Did the actions help or hinder?

Lessons Learned

What lessons learned did you take away from the experience?



Lessons Learned and Best Practices in Process Improvement A Project Manager's Perspective (Continued)

discovery and communication process needs to be ongoing, in every phase of a project. One key point that resonated with the audience –

“In order for... [Lessons Learned] to be effective, you have to actually implement what you've learned”.

Given the level of chuckling that followed that statement in the audience, it's a safe bet that more than one of us has been in an information gathering session

with zero implementation follow up.

Lisa also suggested that the best way to pass on learning was by formatting them as stories. The story format is more memorable than a set of bullet points or Excel cells, and captures the storyteller's emotional state along with the concrete lessons. Using the story of a failed attempt to move an object into a building without first measuring the doors brought her point home.

Lisa finished up with five key lessons from her experience in knowledge management and closed to heartfelt applause.

On the Boardwalk: Abi Salimi — President

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 managed projects and software design activities, developed and delivered training materials, and developed different size applications from requirements to implementation in telecommunications, banking, racing, healthcare, lottery, aviation and education.

As a partner in a start-up company, I have developed requirements specifications and strategic business plan for a proprietary Voice-Over-Internet-Protocol (VOIP) language translation system.

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

I have trained and assessed organizations using CMMI model and the SCAMPI appraisal method, PMBOK methodology, ITIL, 5S, and NASPL. I have developed Software Engineering Process Group (SEPG), Quality Assurance (QA) and Project Management Organization (PMO) infrastructures.

I have also developed processes based on the industry best practices such as CMMI, ISO, IEEE, NASPL, 5S and ITIL. I have been instrumental in developing a Testing Capability Model (TCM) based on the industry's best practices to assess the maturity of testing organizations.

How did you get involved in Atlanta SPIN?

Prior to my move to Atlanta in 1996, I was involved in the local chapter of the SPIN in Orlando, Florida. After my move, I got involved in the Atlanta's local chapter of SPIN. At the time, the Atlanta SPIN was relatively new. I remember that, at times, there were only 3-5 participants (mainly board members) present at the monthly meetings of the Atlanta SPIN.

What benefits have you personally derived from participation in SPIN?

Getting to know and learn from the quality minded professionals; presenting Atlanta SPIN to the international communities such as the SEPG conferences and the ones affiliated with the Software Engineering Institute (SEI); sharpening my leadership skills and finding the job I am in since 2004.

What motivated you to join the Atlanta SPIN Board?

Because of my passion for quality and to offer my expertise in process improvement arena to the professional community, I continued my participation in the Atlanta SPIN at different capacities such as a member, vice president, and president.

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

Evolve Atlanta SPIN into a first class SPIN chapter, where our members, sponsors, directors and other professional chapters across the world consider it a focal point for process knowledge, clientele market, sharing of knowledge and expertise, and leveraging best practices and lessons learned in software and systems quality.

I am delighted to be a part of the Atlanta SPIN team, which with passion and countless hours have made Atlanta SPIN such a great success. I am extending my gratitude and appreciation to every past and present Atlanta SPIN board member.

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”
- September — Fred Haigh — “Process Improvement Alphabet Soup”
- 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?*”

Atlanta SPIN Board of Directors

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|-------------------|----------------------------|
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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.