

# Atlanta SPIN

Software & Systems Process Improvement Network

The Atlanta SPINnaker

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## Aligning Software Projects with Business Needs -

Tarun Talwar, President, Mindspan Systems



**Tarun Talwar**

Do you remember playing this game as a kid? You whisper a short story or statement to the person next to you. That person then whispers the story to the person next to them and so on around the room until you get to the last person. The last person then tells the story or make the statement out loud. More often than not the statement or story is very different than what was originally whispered. This same game is played in the software and system solutions arena as well but it's unintentional. The consequences of getting it wrong however are far greater. Tarun's presentation to our December audience gave us solid examples and solutions to avoiding this "game."

hundred US companies, 51% of the products developed are not usable. This amounts to misdirection of close to 55 billion USD. More than half of those failed projects are attributed to requirements definition or management.

Why? Given those statistics why is it that even though a project can be delivered on time, on budget and error free; it is still a failure. That's because it does not meet the needs of the user.

How can you avoid this failure? First, when you start the requirements gathering process, make sure the right people are in the room. Once you have the right people in the room, work to build consensus among them. Far too often the wrong people are in the room and requirements are captured from the wrong people. You may be talking to the IT group or a manager when you need to be working with the user or business process owner. You will still need to meet with the upper level

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How do we attempt to understand business needs in order to align solutions with the needs of the business? What does the customer need? Many times, what the customer wants is very much different from what they need. We are all familiar with the Standish Group statistics that find in over forty thousand software development projects spread across nine

## Next Meeting: January 21, 20089



**Mark Pellegrini**

### Titanic CM Disasters

**Mark Pellegrini, Research Engineer,  
Georgia Tech Research Institute**

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

## New Board Members and Officers for 2009

In the December 2008 Board of Directors meeting we voted in five new members. With the retiring of three members, this brings the new board up to fourteen people. The board recommended that the regular board meeting scheduled for January 7 be postponed until January 10, 2009. On that day the entire board will meet on the Georgia Tech campus for our annual planning retreat.

The planning retreat is a whole day devoted to planning the major activities for the year. At this meeting we say goodbye to the retiring members, induct the new members and hold elections for board officers and committee members for the new year. The planning session is critical to the success of the organization because it sets the stage for sponsorship and membership activities.

We discuss the program for the year and determine what speakers we will have and the types of events we will conduct. This is the time when we consider things like Signature Events and bringing in a well known speaker. In past events we have had world renowned speakers such as Watts Humphrey and Ed Yourdan. Other types of program ideas include panel discussions like our October "Horror Stories" panel, or events like a vendor fair to let our members

see the types of products and services that are available from vendors in the area.

Other committees discuss their plans for things such as the web site and how to bring more and better value to our members. We will discuss the newsletter and things that will improve it, as well.

In addition, the board holds its monthly planning meeting to prepare for the upcoming monthly general meeting and other logistical matters.

We say thanks to our retiring members who have contributed greatly to our organization:

- Will Bracker,
- Garrison Atkisson,
- Abi Salimi who has decided to take on a support and advisory role

In our next issue, we will introduce our new members and bring you some of the results from the planning meeting so you can get a feel for the types of events we are planning for your entertainment and education.

## Aligning Software Projects with Business Needs (Continued)

management in order to generate a statement. This statement will serve as a guide. It will be the vision and background of why this solution is needed and how that need will be met.

Once you've got the right context and focus, you can start documenting the objectives, scope, team members, success factors, risk analysis and limitations of the project and have a foundation in place to capture requirements.

In the capturing of requirements, Tarun has found that having "techies" gather requirements is a mistake. It is critical to understand that gathering of requirements belongs to a separate role. The person who serves that role must be able to speak and write in the language of the customer. There must be a well understood methodology in gathering and communicating during this process by listening, asking and visualizing and confirming what is being discussed. There needs to be equal emphasis on both process and data requirements. Having a technical person collect requirements may assure that lots of data are defined but the process is poorly understood.

Lastly, there needs to be a strong requirements validation process. You may have done everything up to this point perfectly, but bugs in the application may undermine that effort. Have a well designed verification test. Hand in hand with this process is change management. Changes to requirements, design and test documents should be managed so that traceability is maintained throughout the system

The question and answer session focused on using methods that may be specific to the application. Tarun feels that feedback and validation help refine the method. Another question asked, "how are requirements captured in an Agile environment?" A lively discussion centered on the nature of the project and what the definition of Agile really is. The last question emphasized how important change management is throughout the process.

So, as the last person in line for the story, you can insure you get the right story by using Tarun's experience in this area, Capture, Document and Validate.

## Spotlight on Sponsors



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](#).

### About AMERICAN SYSTEMS

AMERICAN SYSTEMS is an SEI Partner and a registered ISO 9001-2000 company. We are employee-owned, have been profitable throughout our 30 year history, and have over 1500 dedicated staff members in 24 offices nationwide.

Our world-class service delivery methodology allows us to implement best practice models, methods and tools, including: **CMMI, ISO, ITIL, ASQ, CMII, PSM, 6-sigma, Lean, Agile, CoBIT, PMI**, and others.

We affect the rapid transfer of knowledge to client organizations by building self-sustaining systems for continuous improvement in quality, efficiency and return on investment (ROI) in software management and development. Our cost effective, customized, collaborative approach helps our clients realize the benefits of implementing a comprehensive plan for PI in their organizations. Our senior consultants average 20+ years of industry related experience within a broad range of market sectors including: telecom, aerospace, finance, health care, utilities, retail. We participate on, and are authorized to provide these services through, the industry's recognized governing boards.

Model based Process Improvement Programs are proving their worth; with an estimated 5:1 return on investment organizations are often undertaking multiple complementary process improvement initiatives simultaneously.

### Appraisals

Whether you need formal certification, are interested in baselining your current process performance and compliance, or capturing a competitive edge, we will tell you where you stack up. We can provide Informal Gap Analysis, Baseline Appraisals, Incremental Process Appraisals, and Formal Certification Appraisals.

### Consulting

Our team of process improvement experts will collaborate with you in developing, training, delivering, monitoring, and supporting your process improvement initiatives. Across all organizational levels, we deliver solutions through Consulting, Coaching, and Mentoring

### Training

AMERICAN SYSTEMS recommends a comprehensive training program targeted to all members of the organization based on their roles and responsibilities from Executives thru practitioners. Training includes Overviews, Classes, Workshops, Technology, Implementation, and Support

### Staffing

Many organizations don't believe they have adequate resources to initially staff a process initiative; and they therefore delay getting started. Let us provide initial and continuing staff support so you begin immediately realizing the benefits of Process Improvement within your organization.

## Upcoming Speakers

Our Program Committee is working fast and furiously on a full slate of speakers for next year. As the program for next year becomes firmed up we will bring you the lineup for the next few months in this spot. We also post our upcoming speaker list on our web site—[www.atlantaspin.org](http://www.atlantaspin.org). Please check our web site frequently for the latest information about our programs. Also, don't forget to let us know that you are coming to our meetings. If you register for each meeting it will give us a chance to print out a name tag for you and be

sure to have enough food and drink for all.

Here are some of the topics that we are working on for 2009 presentations:

- Mitigating Risks
- Total Cost of Ownership
- Comparing CMMI, ITIL V3 and Agile Methods
- Peer Review Process

## Help A PHD Candidate

As a participant to the SPIN group, I thought this may be of interest to SPIN, and of course, some help to me in pursuit of a sample set in my quantitative analysis.

I have constructed a survey to consider Project Management Success Factors as I complete my PhD dissertation at Capella University. I am seeking your help as a participant with a survey. The participation is voluntary. Feel free to forward this email to other individuals that have managed projects or function as a project manager.

The survey will only take between 20 and 25 minutes of your time. As a thank you for your participation, you may opt-in to be entered into a drawing for a

\$100 MasterCard gift card upon completing the survey. To begin the survey, simply click on the URL address below or copy and paste the address into your browser.

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?  
sm=3RsHc1PUcePV\\_2ff9R4q46sA\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=3RsHc1PUcePV_2ff9R4q46sA_3d_3d)

Thank you for assisting academic research in the project management profession.

Regards,

Rodger Oren,  
PMP; PhD Candidate  
Capella University

[rodoren@comcast.net](mailto:rodoren@comcast.net)

## Special Offer For The Upcoming International Requirements Engineering Conference

The International *Requirements Engineering Conference* is sponsored by the IEEE and is the premier academic and industrial event in the field of Requirements Engineering. The conference provides a forum for researchers, educators, and industrial practitioners where they present and discuss recent innovations, trends, experiences, and concerns in the field of requirements engineering, which includes systems analysis, software process improvement, software product-line engineering, architectural analysis, *etc.* Many of the participants influence the development methodologies and tools that are used in their own organizations as well as client organizations. The 17<sup>th</sup> international event ([www.re09.org](http://www.re09.org)) will be held in the vibrant and conveniently located Atlanta, GA (USA) **Atlanta 31 August – 4 September 2009**. Requirements engineering is increasingly

becoming a dominant activity during systems development—with increased awareness for the need to capture requirements that reflect the stakeholders' desires and needs. For more information, including the Call for Paper & Proposals, see [www.re09.org](http://www.re09.org).

Atlanta SPIN members who have or will participate in at least three Atlanta SPIN general meetings will receive the reduced “IEEE/ACM member discount”.

Any RE'09 sponsorship gained through Atlanta SPIN will receive 15% off for 2-star (\$4k) and above. See Sponsorship link on [www.re09.org](http://www.re09.org).

**Atlanta SPIN Board of Directors**

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The Atlanta SPINnaker  
Email: newsletter@atlantaspin.org

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International Institute for Software Testing  
Promoting Disciplined Software Testing Practices

**And our many Contributing Members!**

OFFICIAL MEMBER OF PEARSON EDUCATION  
**User Group Program**

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/](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](http://www.sei.cmu.edu/membership) [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. Atlanta SPIN is a 501C3 non-profit corporation. Your contributions may be tax deductible and qualify for corporate matching contributions from your company.