



Atlanta SPIN

Software Process Improvement Network

The Atlanta SPINnaker

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Dave Card Opens New Venue to a Full House



David Card Opening the Meeting

“different” was that CMMI was a framework that drove a persistent process structure; Lean was a set of principles for efficient and effective processes; and Six Sigma was a problem-solving method that addresses specific improvement needs.

Dave then reviewed these three different approaches with a compare and contrast approach. He noted that CMMI evolved synthetic benchmarks as a way to get at methods to improve Quality, especially to reduce the Cost of Quality (e.g., rework, warranty, liability). One reason was that best in class companies were reluctant to share their secrets to success, especially with their competitors.

Dave argued that Lean is very misunderstood. Lean is not about lightweight processes. It has nothing to do with the amount of processes. For a company to be successful with Lean, in fact, they need to have strong robust processes in place. Lean itself has its basis in queuing theory. One can model or think of a process as being a system of queues, with its principles aimed at ensuring that a company works more efficiently by managing these queues well.

Dave noted that the Lean principles are not so obvious to apply to software engineering. approach actually requires less discipline!

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David Card of Q-Labs gave an insightful presentation on the inter-relationships between the Lean, Six Sigma and CMMI approaches. He started out by noting that there were significant differences between the advocates and organizations that spawned these three approaches. He further acknowledged that they don't necessarily seem to have much in common between them, and in some circumstances their advocates were fighting with each other to get the funds or resources that might be available in an organization.

However, once you begin to look at the underlying foundations for each, you can begin to see how these apparently different views of the world are in fact compatible with one another. In the “similar but different” world Dave described, the “similar” was that all three are approaches to Continuous Improvement; the

What's Next @ Atlanta SPIN:

Tim Zonca, Serena

The What, Why, When and How of ITIL

September 20, 2006



David Card

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David Card Highlights - continued

He noted that more discipline is required if a company is adopting incremental development or agile approaches. If this discipline isn't there, you're kidding yourself if you think you're doing anything other than hacking. He further observed that the waterfall approach actually requires less discipline!

Dave discussed the factors that were important to increasing throughput following a Lean approach. These factors in general can be measured, and Lean ties closely to managing through the use of such measurements. In this context, he discussed the importance of understanding and allowing for the impact of new projects on the other work going on in an organization when estimates are done.

With the Six Sigma approach, Dave noted how the key idea here is to use statistics and understand variability. Too often a company doesn't know what the risk or uncertainty of a decision will be. Statistics can help assess this. Dave discussed the "DMAIC" (Define, measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control) problem-solving approach in this regard. The insertion of a step to "Recognize" important business problems is an important addition to this model. Furthermore, for an organization to systematically benefit from a Six Sigma approach, the addition of standardization and integration can lead to the institutionalization of the improved approaches adopted. One real issue with Six Sigma is that there is no controlling or governing body for it.

Dave concluded the presentation by discussing the interplay between the three different approaches. CMMI provides a framework for continual benchmarking and an assessment-driven improvement strategy; it provides a good description of what to do. However, it does not directly consider performance (i.e., the "how") as Lean and Six Sigma do. Dave noted that Lean principles can be nicely mapped to CMMI Levels, and as such provide good insight into the principles that should be incorporated into the CMMI processes. With regard to Six Sigma, he indicated that these methods apply primarily at CMMI Levels 4 and 5. These methods require measurement, and it's crucial to realize that there is no benefit to measurement per se; that value is derived from what you do with the measurements. Done well, measurements enable an organization to recognize early what's going wrong and take steps to minimize the damage.

There is additional information in the slides that Dave used. These can be found on the Atlanta SPIN website at <http://www.atlantaspin.org/meetinginfo.htm>.



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New Venue!

The August meeting was held at [La Quinta Inn & Suites - Atlanta Perimeter Medical](#) located at 6260 Peachtree Dunwoody, Atlanta, GA 30328. The Board is assessing this location as a permanent venue for future meetings. It welcomes your feedback on this potential change.

In October

Chris Colston

AGSI

One Size Fits None-Tailoring and Aligning
SDLC For Organizational
Scope and Complexity

On the BOARD walk Fred Haigh - Education Committee- Atlanta SPIN

Fred has been on the board for the last three years and has performed a variety of functions within the SPIN board. He has served as Webmaster and delivered a presentation on Six Sigma at the March 2004 SPIN meeting. He has also identified several speakers and recruited sponsors for the organization during this period.



Fred Haigh has been in software development for over 30 years with the last 10 years focused on software process improvement. Fred is a Six Sigma Black Belt and is certified in ITIL. For the last 3 years, Fred has been implementing CMMI in a variety of companies in Atlanta and the Southeast. Fred currently works for Thoughtmill. Fred has a BS in Mechanical Engineering and a MBA from the University of Pittsburgh.

How did you get involved with Atlanta SPIN?

I got involved with software process improvement in 1996. I found the Atlanta SPIN on the SEI web site and attended a few meetings. I found the topics very interesting and many were directly applicable to the work I was doing at the time.

What process improvement-related activities have you personally participated in?

At Acterna, I was the manager of Process and Quality. I was responsible for implementing a CMM level 3 set of processes into a organization of about 60 software developers. Since 2003 I have been primarily consulting and have managed several implementation projects for CMMI and other quality methodologies including ITIL and Six Sigma.

What benefits have you personally derived from participation in SPIN?

I enjoy meeting others with similar interests. I like having the opportunity to spend some time with others in the process field and learn from their experiences.

What motivated you to join the Atlanta SPIN Board?

In 2003 I wanted to do more than just take from the organization. When I joined the board I immediately took on a variety of responsibilities and over the last few years I have been webmaster and have done a lot of service work at meetings like running the sign-in table, coordinating speakers, and have brought three new sponsors to SPIN. I have enjoyed having an opportunity to contribute to improving SPIN.

What do you hope to achieve this year within Atlanta SPIN?

I would like to continue to help the board improve the quality of speakers and grow the organization. When I first joined, the average meeting brought 12 – 15 people to hear a speaker. When I spoke on Six Sigma a few years ago we had an audience of about 60. I think that given the kind of software development community in Atlanta we should have over 100 people at any given meeting. It will take a lot of work to get the word out and spur the interest to draw that many people regularly.

Spotlight on our Sponsors: Borland

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Given this emphasis on process, Borland's support of Atlanta SPIN is easy to understand.

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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 650+ 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.

The Board has a process for identifying excellent speakers, and provides guidelines and necessary support to help ensure the presentations are top quality. The Board sees these as the cornerstone of its value proposition to the overall group. To this end, the Board conducted surveys last year to gain a better understanding of its members' interests. This analysis has directly influenced the choice of specific presentations during the past six months. The Board continues to seek excellent relevant talks of interest to the membership; please advise us of potential talks and speakers that you think may be of interest; contact us at education_committee@atlantaspin.org.

In future Newsletters, we plan to provide more information about the goals and activities that Atlanta SPIN is pursuing. We welcome your feedback on how to improve this newsletter; contact us at newsletter@atlantaspin.org.

Ron Wojcik, editor