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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

What do you and your company now do? And, what led you to do this work?

I am the former Chief SEI CMM/CMMI Assessor for BAE SYSTEMS worldwide. I currently run a small consultancy company performing CMM and CMMI Assessments. We also provide training and general consultancy targeted at helping organizations bring their development activities into the 21st century.

Can you tell us about CMMI, Objectives, and Levels? And, at a high level, the similarities and differences between CMMI and ISO.

CMM and CMMI are industry standard 5 level models designed to assist organizations in their endeavors to develop quality software in a more ordered and controlled way via processes. CMM and CMMI bring discipline to a generally chaotic world of developing software through the use of process. CMM and CMMI provide a common sense framework for process improvement activities, giving management the ability to measure progress.

Can you briefly describe the Fagan Defect-free Process (or FDP)?

FDP is a method of removing defects from software early in the development process. It exists best in a disciplined environment where software development is controlled through the use of a defined process. The Fagan Inspection Process defines a focused way of systematically searching out and removing defects in an efficient and cost effective way. For more mature organizations it becomes the cornerstone for a continuous process improvement activity.

How does the FDP relate to and fit into CMMI?

FDP and CMM and CMMI are symbiotic in nature, in that they both mutually support each other. CMM and CMMI provides the process framework that allows FDP to operate most successfully.

Does an organization have to be at a certain minimum CMM/CMMI level before the FDP can be used productively, or can it be initiated at any CMMI level?

No! Although the more stable the process, the better the results. If it's important to get a quick return on investment, then I would recommend start with this to gain your management's confidence. Then put in place a more controlled process later.

If you can, please relate cases in which FDP has accelerated attainment of higher levels of CMMI and ISO.

In my role of managing a multinational organization's assessment process, I have seen various approaches to process improvement. Some have used FDP as their primary mechanism for moving their organizations from Level 1 to Level 5 of the CMM in approximately 5 years. Other organizations have used FDP as part of a broader approach encompassing many other process activities, again to equal success.

Can you discuss any specific results that you have seen?

FDP has been the prime method of reducing defects in our products. FDP resulted in a testing cycle being reduced from 3 complete test cycles to 1, providing an approximate 20% saving and early delivery of the product. Our customers' reaction to FDP is extremely positive and our reputation improved in that our products reliability and functionality improved significantly. Our engineers, after a skeptical start, have found that FDP helps develop a better understanding of the product and the sharing of best practice.

What is the Return On Investment of FDP, and how soon after the class is it realized ... days, weeks?

From day 1... although quantitatively, the bottom line return is not always visible to project managers until testing starts. Initial returns are sometimes qualitative in that problems reduce and schedule is maintained.

In what sizes and types of products have you seen FDP produce positive results?

In various size organizations and on various products. The smaller products tend to be more selective of what they inspect such as high-risk items, for instance requirements, etc. One-line changes are subject usually to simpler techniques for removing defects.

How do the managers and engineers receive the FDP? How soon after the class do they implement it?

In my case, with skepticism due to past experience with poor imitations with the same name. They implemented FDP on the day after the course. In fact, some said they inspected their own products during the course; therefore it started during the course itself.

As a consultant, what would you recommend to your clients regarding the FDP?

There are many imitations out there and many people living off the name, but none live up to the real thing. If you can only afford to do one thing, do this. As part of the broader process improvement initiative within the CMM/CMMI framework, FDP can help organizations improve in leaps and bounds.

There are not many methods and tools that I would recommend as highly as FDP. I wholeheartedly support this process.