



Know Where Your Organization Stands Today and Determine How to Improve for Tomorrow



At the Air Force Software Technology Support Center (STSC), CROSSTALK's parent organization, some of our most requested services are our assessment services. When describing these assessment services, we often use a comparison of going to the doctor for an annual check-up. An STSC assessor or a team of assessors diagnoses the health of an organization and provides an overall rating. STSC assessors present their findings and provide suggestions on improvement but it is up to the organization to act on implementing the necessary process improvement practices to better the health of their organization. The *doctor* (assessor) can't do that for them.

That is the focus of this month's issue: Assessments and Certifications. A variety of doctors and diagnostic techniques exist in the systems and software field today. Whether the doctor specializes in ISO 9001, Capability Maturity Model® (CMM®), Capability Maturity Model IntegrationSM (CMMI®), Federal Aviation Administration integrated Capability Maturity Model (FAA-iCMM®), or is more of a general practitioner, there are many standards and models to help him or her assess an organization. These standards and models become the core or foundation by which a company's project and organizational processes are built. So together, these standards and models are critical in our understanding, whether assessors, acquirers, managers or practitioners, of where an organization stands today to determine how to improve for tomorrow.

With over 500,000 companies worldwide registered to ISO 9001, we begin this month's issue with a look at this quality management system standard. In *Why Be Assessed to the Most Prevalent Standard in Use Today?*, Robert Vickroy provides helpful information to companies just beginning their ISO 9001 continuous process improvement journey.

Next, in *CMMI Myths and Realities*, Lauren Heinz discusses how the CMMI Product Suite has helped hundreds of organizations improve their processes despite initial concerns regarding the size and complexity of the model as well as what type of organization the CMMI might be best suited for.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Lockheed Martin have both been developing and implementing integrated process improvement frameworks, specifically the FAA-iCMM and the Integrated Engineering Process standard, respectively. In *There Is More to Process Improvement Than Just CMM*, Dr. Linda Ibrahim and Joan Weszka explain how integrating existing models and standards can address broad, enterprise-level process improvement. Appraisal methods for these integrated models are also discussed.

Don't miss this month's supporting articles, *Predictable Assembly From Certifiable Components* by Scott A. Hissam, *Software Engineering for End-User Programmers* by Dr. Curtis Cook et al., *Competitiveness Versus Security* by Don O'Neill, and this month's online article, *Introducing TPAM: Test Process Assessment Model* by Dr. Yuri Chernak.

CROSSTALK'S HEALTH WATCH

Finally, as we discuss how to determine the health of an organization, you may be wondering how CROSSTALK's health is at this time. As we reported in our February issue, we lost our funding due to the closure of the Air Force Computer Resources Support Improvement Program, our previous sponsor. I am pleased to report that we will continue publishing CROSSTALK through fiscal year 2004. We continue to explore new approaches to producing the journal beyond that. Our goal is to keep CROSSTALK healthy and thriving for many tomorrows. Please visit <www.stsc.hill.af.mil> for the latest on our future status.

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