

Some useful links:

European Software Inst.
<http://www.esi.es/>

Crosstalk Def Journal
<http://www.stsc.hill.af.mil/crosstalk/>

Business of Software Blog
<http://blog.businessofsoftware.org/>

Aust SW Quality Institute
<http://www.sqi.gu.edu.au/indexFrameset.html>

Refactoring
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_refactoring

How To Measure Software Quality With ISO9126

One of the key benefits of using ISO9126 is that it provides a very detailed mechanism to define what quality means to a project (or customer!) and a means to measure it. Rather than saying "we need this product to be of high quality", we can define quality e.g. high reliability and portability, low complexity. We can then identify and use metrics to assess how the product is conforming.

However, one of the disadvantages is that its complexity often brings with it an extra layer of development and management overhead. It is seen by some in the industry as an all or nothing tool, and because ISO9126 includes lots of attributes, they feel compelled to use them all. After all, why not have complete visibility.

But in doing so, the whole measurement activity can be rendered ineffective because developers will need to spend much more of their time collecting metrics – not a likely possibility. The gauges are set to 'high' on all of these attributes.

An important principles behind ISO9126 is that a set of measures can be used by selecting a SUBSET of the ISO9126 attributes. Indeed there are a number of metrics which can conflict with each other e.g. a highly portable system needs to be coded very differently to a highly maintainable one.

But how do we choose which ones are useful to us? When starting out, select only 2-3 attributes which

1. are easy to collect – we're talking automation here!
2. Are seen as inoffensive but important to the team members who will collect them

When implementing a method to collect and report the measures, make sure that results cannot be traced to any specific individual (or as much anonymity as possible – though not always possible in small firms).

One of the side effects of any measurement program is that developers and/or managers may react in ways you do not expect. It's always a case of what's in it for them. Like any change initiative, it's vital to explain that metrics are used to assess the quality of the product, not individuals.

Do you have well structured, repeatable and predictable processes, teams and set of customers? If not, then you probably won't benefit from ISO9126 in it's entirety.



If you're in Brisbane on 10 July 2009 you can catch us presenting at the ACS SPASM SIG IBM Centre, L5 348 Edward St, Brisbane
Why processes degrade and 5 Steps to Help Your Business



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Agile and CMMI – Working Together

You may have seen some of the Agile versus CMMI debates happening at the moment. Lots of online and forum discussions, outputs from Agile gurus and CMMI practitioners. For many people it's an either/or problem and they do not see how the benefits of the other camp could possibly benefit them.

Both models and their derivatives provide useful insights into running a software development project (and company). We can have a combined model if we use both as a means to understanding our underlying organizational problems and hence to solve them. Choosing one over the other is unnecessary if we use the best of both. Even the most agile company still needs to learn lessons, understand and prioritize their work and the most disciplined CMMI team still needs to be agile in this uncertain economic and technical climate.



James Kelly, CEO