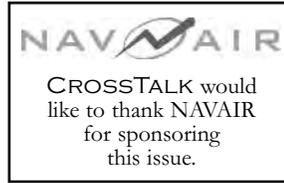




# TSP: Tailor ... Learn ... Grow ... Apply ... and, of Course, Repeat



If you've been involved with software and system process improvement for even a short time, you've most likely experienced the challenges associated with applying process methodologies and tools to your real-life projects. For many, the realization that "one size does not fit all" can lead to frustration about how best to tailor the processes and tools to fit real-life project needs.



TSP is one process framework and toolkit helping teams improve software quality and productivity. Thoughtfully marrying TSP application with your unique team, products, and goals can put you on the path to meeting software cost and schedule commitments.

In my experience, the most valuable leg up for adopting TSP are TSP coaches, who focus on supporting the team (as well as individuals) to transition from workshop learning to practical application. They play a huge role in motivating and guiding the team through their TSP journey. Given the coaches' first-hand TSP experience—and their in-depth knowledge and appreciation of the toolkit—they lend a supportive hand as the team tailors, monitors, learns, and grows.

An example of TSP tailoring that can have powerful results is modifying role definitions. While TSP does define specific and meaningful roles, the assumption is that these roles can (and may need to be) thoughtfully tailored. In considering how to apply the roles to your project, it is best to evaluate each role in the context of your team's culture, size, and dynamics. Also, make an effort to align teammates to the roles based on the expectations for a specific role and their unique capabilities. Just going through this effort to align roles with your team's context and characteristics can lead to unexpected insights and learning.

Standard TSP application assumes that you are tracking a single product from start to finish. Since this is not always the case, think carefully about how best to apply the processes when multiple efforts need to be completed in unison.

TSP offers a useful and free tool to gather and report metrics. This tool is most valuable when you take the time to understand how the metrics will be used in your larger project context. Based on your experiences, you may even be able to offer insights into how to make the tool more useful. For instance, based on user feedback that indicated a need for milestones to support parallel task execution, the tool now offers a single target data feature. With this feature, progress toward incremental milestones can be evaluated and understood.

While TSP is for software, it provides a construct for detailed planning and task allocation to any engineering effort or product. Basically, any task or group of tasks that can be broken down into increments, activities, goals, and timelines can benefit from applying TSP. Again, it's a matter of understanding your particular requirements and context, and determining how best to integrate TSP capabilities.

And finally, to support your endeavors are the annual TSP user conferences, with the next gathering in Pittsburgh September 20-23 (see <[www.sei.cmu.edu/tsp/symposium/2010](http://www.sei.cmu.edu/tsp/symposium/2010)>). These get-togethers provide a forum for open and honest dialogue about the "goods, bads, and others" related to teams' efforts to adopt TSP. These symposiums reinforce the culture and context you would expect to find in any authentic improvement and learning effort.

So the bottom line is that to be successful, no matter what approach you choose, means that you have to take the long-haul perspective and tailor, learn, grow, apply, and repeat as needed. Of course, it goes without saying that you will also need to factor in a healthy dose of relentless patience.

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