



Needing It “Yesterday”



When asking a customer when they need something done, you’ve most likely heard the reply, “Yesterday!” Why is this answer so common? Possibly it’s because customers typically do not request products until they are needed. I liken this phenomenon to my lunchtime habits. I don’t go looking for food until I’m saying out loud, “I’m starving!” Both are an exaggeration, but both cause the consumer to seek out those who can deliver products in a rapid and reliable fashion. I know this firsthand through both demanding software customers—and my own complaints during two-minute waits at the drive-thru window. Sometimes we just cannot get things fast enough.

I Googled the combination of the words “rapid” and “reliable” from this issue’s theme to further research this need for fast-paced delivery. In less than a second, my search produced more than 45 million results ranging from patient care recovery to back-up recovery software and from cellular service to cellular genotyping. To compare, searching the words “food, air, water, shelter” took twice as long to produce only a half-million results. What can we deduce from this Internet exercise? Possibly nothing, but at least anecdotally (or maybe facetiously), we can presume that consumers crave fast and dependable products even more than the four basic necessities of life.

The fact that many of our customers reside in a theater of war only heightens the stakes and drives delivery times to shorter and shorter periods. The shorter delivery time compels the software community to find better methods and tools for increasing the rate of development while maintaining, if not increasing, the dependability of our wares. Just in time, this issue of CROSSTALK provides an in-depth examination of such methods.

Ilya Lipkin and Martin Guldahl’s article, *Using WYSIWYG GUI Tools With UML* reveals the benefits and hazards of combining these tools to increase productivity and improve rapid prototyping. Timothy J. Trapp, Donald S. Hanline II, Howard D. Kuettner, Jr., and William A. Christian examine software safety concerns when utilizing automated tools for rapid deployment efforts in *Software Safety for Model-Driven Development*. Portia Crowe and Dr. Robert Cloutier—in *Evolutionary Capabilities Developed and Fielded in Nine Months*—show how to quickly and economically use an Agile approach in every phase of a rapid development program.

Also in this issue is *A Distributed Multi-Company Software Project*, where Dr. William R. Nichols, Anita D. Carleton, Watts S. Humphrey, and James W. Over describe how two software development companies were able to jointly develop a large system without reducing quality. Lori Holmes and Roger Heller introduce us to a measurement of previously unaccounted for development project maintenance activities—termed as “impact points,” a compliment to traditional function point measures—in *Measuring Maintenance Activities Within Development Projects*.

This issue concludes with Martin Allen’s Open Forum article, *From Substandard to Successful Software*. Allen discusses the potential hazards of inferior software products and methods to enhance the probability of creating great ones.

I encourage you to take a break from your hurried environment and enjoy this issue of CROSSTALK. Just don’t break too long because somewhere today a customer is noticing a software need that you can supply—and they probably needed it yesterday.



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