



Data and Data Management



Data drives decisions. This statement may sound too simplistic, but the truth remains that humans need, crave, and desire data. Data is used in nearly every choice we make, from the most mundane decisions such as where to dine (location, taste, caloric content, type of food, price) to the selection of a fabric softener (aroma, effectiveness, volume, eco-friendliness, price).

Data inundation and “analysis paralysis” are real dangers due to the ease of access and abundance of information. Additionally, the mobility of personal computing devices creates a data wave, cresting at our fingertips. It can overwhelm any person, anywhere on the planet, at any time.

Data enters our lives at breakneck speeds and frequencies. Your commute to work likely involves various data deliverables: AM/FM radio broadcasts, satellite transmissions, billboard advertisements, traffic signs and signals, marquee commercials, and the odd gesture from a fellow commuter.

The real data feast begins when we arrive at work and begin interfacing with faxes, e-mails, text messages, telephone calls, status reports, market forecasts, meeting charts, figures, facts, the rumor mill, and even simple co-worker chitchat. What is a person to do with it all? Many of us will begin to filter based upon priority, but this presents a danger of filtering too much or becoming overwhelmed due to insufficient filtering. We must learn to manage and leverage data effectively to be successful in today’s business environment as well as in our daily lives. The December issue of CROSSTALK is here to help software professionals make sense of it all.

In Dr. Joseph P. Avery’s article, *A Different Kind of Web-Based Knowledge Management: The DTRA Acquisition ToolBook*, he shares the Defense Threat Reduction Agency’s method of intelligent storage and timely dissemination of data—to the right people at the right time via the Web.

Sandy Schwalb offers assistance if you suffer from a lack of qualified data. Her article, *The Defense Technical Information Center: Information for the Defense Community*, provides compelling reasons for utilizing this virtual treasure trove of structured, vetted, and certified information.

Equally important to data is time and money, and two articles explore the use of Earned Value Management (EVM) data to ensure both are optimized for project success. Through real project data, Walt Lipke assists software professionals by analyzing the predictive capabilities of EVM techniques in *Project Duration Forecasting: Comparing Earned Value Management Methods to Earned Schedule*. In *The Two Most Useful Earned Value Metrics: The CPI and the TCPI*, Quentin W. Fleming and Joel M. Koppelman describe the use of EVM data as a tool to predict needed performance levels for achieving financial success.

This issue also addresses ways to gain customers and then keep them happy through producing quality products. In *Certifications Help Organizations and Clients*, longtime CROSSTALK contributor George Jackelen offers insights, for requestors and prospective bidders alike, as to the value of certifications in government Requests for Proposals. In *Using Software Quality Methods to Reduce Cost and Prevent Defects*, Rick Spiewak and Karen McRitchie offer a proactive and practical best practices framework for software construction, leading to better results, lower costs, and less developmental mishaps.

In the spirit of the holidays, please accept the December issue as our gift to you from the CROSSTALK family. We hope it assists in making 2009 the best year ever, and we wish you and your family peace and prosperity for years to come.

Kasey Thompson
Publisher