



A Model About Nothing

Welcome to “Backfire,” the interview within a journal where we cross-examine popular icons for software truth. This month we have the cast of *Seinfeld* – Jerry, George, Elaine, and Kramer who have developed a Comedy Maturity Model (CMM) to teach young comedians.

Gary: First things first, what gave you the idea to teach comedy to the masses?

Jerry: Everybody is so serious now days. I thought to myself, what is going on in this community? Are you people aware of what is happening? What is driving you to this behavior? Is it the humidity? Is it the Muzak? Is it the white shoes?

George: That is so true! I have no funny friends. I am the funny one – El Clown!

Gary: So you formed a company.

Kramer: Yes, the company is Somewhat Comical Institute (SCI), pending legal review.

Jerry: I preferred the name Super Silly Inc.

George: Elaine wanted the name to be Silly Putty Limited, for obvious reasons, but there were trademark issues.

Gary: Who came up with the idea of creating a Comedy Maturity Model?

Jerry: Kramer. He was watching a PBS special on software.

George: I love those people. You can't ask them questions. They are so mentally gifted that we must not disturb the delicate genius unless it is in the confines of an office. When huge sums of money are involved then the delicate genius can be disturbed.

Kramer: I come up with these things, I know they are gold but nothing happens, hence, I called Elaine.

Gary: Why Elaine?

Kramer: She's a calculating, cold-hearted businesswoman. When there is dirty work to be done, she doesn't mind stomping on a few throats.

Gary: Why not George or Jerry?

Kramer: There is a little too much chlorine in that gene pool.

George: Yeah, I'm a great quitter. It's one of the few things I do well. I come from a long line of quitters. My father was a quitter; my grandfather was a quitter ... I was raised to give up.

Gary: Tell me about the model.

Elaine: It has five levels. All good models have five levels.

George: I wanted seven.

Jerry: The first level is “Breathing,” everyone qualifies in this level because we believe everyone has a little humor.

George: I say stupid things all the time. I cannot go two minutes without saying something stupid.

Kramer: We didn't want to exclude potential clients so we set the bar low. It's like soccer – everyone gets to play.

Gary: What comes after the breathing level?

Elaine: Level 2 is “Grin,” the basic art of remembering jokes. Level 3 is “Giggle,” delivering jokes. Level 4 is “Guffaw,” the art of creating jokes. Level 5 is “Gut Buster,” stringing jokes into a witty routine.

George: Each level has several KCAs.

Gary: KCAs?

Jerry: Knowledge Comedy Areas.

Kramer: We load the lower levels with a lot of banal KCAs and then reduce them to a few pedantic KCAs in the upper levels. That allows us to hook them and keep them.

Gary: There is not much comedic meat to the model?

George: I think that you think that a certain something is not all that it could be, when, in fact, it is all that it should be ... and more!

Jerry: You have to be patient with models; it is like knocking over a Coke machine. You can't do it in one push. You have to rock it back and forth a few times, and then it goes over.

Elaine: You know what they say, “You don't sell the steak; you sell the sizzle.”

Gary: It sounds like the SCI CMM is more about making money than helping comedians.

George: Why would we want to help somebody? That is what nuns and Red Cross workers are for.

Kramer: It's like the Dewey Decimal System ... what a scam that was. I could raise enough money to cure polio.

Jerry: It's about nothing, a model about nothing.

Gary: How will you make money on the CMM?

Kramer: Assessments, workshops, and consulting.

Gary: Cosmo Kramer is consulting?

Kramer: Oh, I'm out there Gary, I'm out there!

Gary: Who would consider you comedy consultants?

George: Hey, we have artistic integrity.

Jerry: Artistic integrity? Where did you come up with that? You are not artistic and you have no integrity.

George: You know, if you take everything I have done in my entire life and condense it down into one day, it looks decent.

Kramer: The real money is in the spin-offs baby!

Gary: Spin-offs?

Elaine: Oh yes we have the Stand-up Comedy Maturity Model (Sup-CMM), Improvisation Comedy Maturity Model (I-CMM), Situation Comedy Maturity Model (Sit-CMM), Political Comedy Maturity Model (P-CMM), and for the night owls the Late Night Comedy Maturity Model (Ln-CMM).

Gary: Will all the spin-offs confuse young comedians?

Jerry: Of course, but we will integrate the models and sell services to understand the new integrated model.

Gary: It seems like a long road just to get back to one model.

Jerry: The road less traveled is less traveled for a reason.

George: It's like selling them a car, you stick them with the undercoating, rust proofing, dealer prep ... suddenly they are on their backs like turtles.

Gary: So, it is a lie.

George: Just remember, it's not a lie if you believe it.

Gary: You're crazy.

Kramer: Are we, or are we so sane that you just blew your mind?

Jerry: Maturity models are funny business.

Okay, thank you Jerry, George, Elaine, and Kramer. Join us next time when Backfire cross-examines Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid on outsourcing.

– Gary A. Petersen
Shim Enterprise, Inc.
gary.petersen@shiminc.com