



CROSSTALK Welcomes New Sponsors



I am pleased to announce that the three U.S. Air Force Air Logistics Centers' (ALC) Software Divisions have joined together to become CROSSTALK's new co-sponsors. The three maintenance directorate divisions are commonly referred to by their office symbol, MAS, and are located at Ogden ALC, Hill Air Force Base, Utah; Oklahoma City ALC, Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma; and Warner Robins ALC, Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. Well known for high-quality software development and sustainment capabilities, the divisions are currently under the chief leadership of Randy Hill, Kevin Stamey, and Tom Christian, respectively. You will see little change to CROSSTALK as the journal's mission remains the same:

To encourage the engineering development of software in order to improve the reliability, sustainability, and responsiveness of our war fighting capability and to inform and educate readers on up-to-date policy decisions and new software engineering technologies.

Also, the Air Force Software Technology Support Center will continue in its role as the publisher as it has since CROSSTALK's inception in 1988.

We proudly begin this issue by announcing the fourth annual U.S. Government's Top 5 Programs contest, formerly called the Top 5 Quality Software Projects. The National Defense Industrial Association will facilitate the award process this year. You can submit your 2004 nomination at <www.ndia.org>.

This month we highlight project management and begin with an article from a longtime CROSSTALK supporter, Capers Jones. In his special report to CROSSTALK, *Software Project Management Practices: Failure Versus Success*, Jones looked at 250 large software projects. He found six common problem areas: project planning, cost estimating, measurements, milestone tracking, change control, and quality control. Learn how project managers focusing on these six areas can increase their project's chance of success.

Next, *Catastrophe Disentanglement: Getting Software Projects Back on Track* by E.M. Bennatan is featured in our theme section. This article describes how a project catastrophe can be determined through budget, schedule, or quality aspects and presents a 10-step process to aid a project manager and his or her team in turning around their project before it's too late.

As organizations continue to journey to high process maturity levels, teams may find themselves faced with applying causal analysis to identify defects or problems and their associated symptoms, causes, and corrective actions. In our final theme article *Understanding Causal Systems* by David N. Card, the basic concepts and terminology of causal systems are defined along with a model to facilitate reasoning.

In our first supporting article, *Requirements Engineering So Things Don't Get Ugly* by Deb Jacobs, we are reminded of the importance of customers and development teams working together to communicate, understand, and define effective requirements throughout a project lifecycle. This author discusses the basics of requirements engineering and defines key steps that a project manager can take to ensure requirements are defined, analyzed, and managed properly.

Our issue wraps up with *Independent Estimates at Completion – Another Method* by Oklahoma's MAS Deputy Chief Walt Lipke. Used to predict the final cost of a project, an Independent Estimate at Completion (IEAC) is a method often used by cost analysts and project managers. In this article, Lipke reviews several common calculations for IEAC and offers insights into why optimistic and questionable results may occur and thus proposes alternative calculations.

As we begin a new fiscal year at CROSSTALK, I welcome our new co-sponsors and look forward to their insights into the many lessons learned gained by their individual software divisions. Through this new partnership, we strengthen our commitment to disseminate information aimed at helping the defense software community acquire, develop, and sustain software better.

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Publisher