



# The 12-Step Program for Software Weight Watchers

In the February issue of *CROSSTALK*, I sensed an intellectual melee in the air. Six months later, software publications and conferences were abuzz. In an industry where plans are inadequate and planning is essential, we are starting to question the strong hold of predictive, process oriented, model-based software development.

Grassroots intrigue with lightweight methods like eXtreme Programming (XP) and Scrum has triggered software developers to question their approach, methods, and focus. Although questions currently outweigh answers, this debate has broken the assiduous fixation on such heavyweight methods like the Capability Maturity Model® Integration<sup>SM</sup> (CMMI<sup>SM</sup>) and Software Process Improvement and Capability dEtermination.

I am, however, concerned for individuals, teams, and organizations that are ensnared and laden by incompatible methods or approaches. For some these processes and methods have become addicting and will be hard to break.

For those who are troubled, I offer the time-tested 12-Step program used by millions of people to successfully transform their lives and recover from obsessive-compulsive behaviors. With modification, I hope these steps successfully amend software development habits and aid in the recovery from career threatening behaviors.

If you are clinging to the sanctuary of models, processes, and theoretical control, and find these heavy methods too restrictive for your small-to-medium projects, unstable requirements, competent team, and short deadlines then repeat after me: “I, (state your name) am a heavyweight zealot. I promise to follow the 12 Steps for Heavyweights.”

## 12 Steps for Heavyweights

1. I admit I was powerless over predictability, and my life had become unimaginative.
2. I believe that a power greater than a process, model, or best practice could restore my sanity.
3. I made a decision to turn my will and my career over to the care of vigilance, acumen, proficiency, and ingenuity.
4. I searched and made a fearless inventory of my respect for colleagues and customers.
5. I admit to customers, myself, and to colleagues the exact nature of my wrongs.
6. I am entirely ready to have pair programming, coding standards, and iterative deliveries remove my defects.
7. I humbly ask my customer, collaborative colleague, and test programs to reveal my shortcomings.
8. I made a list of customers I harmed, and I am willing to make amends to them all.
9. I will make amends to customers wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. I will continue to take personal inventory, and when I am wrong will promptly admit it and refactor.
11. I will seek through collective ownership to improve my conscious contact with customers asking only for knowledge of their will for me and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a creative awakening, I will carry this message to heavyweight zealots and practice these principles in all my affairs.

If your proclivity for collaboration, rapid development, and empirical control has led you to the fast paced world of XP, Scrum, Crystal, adaptive software development, feature-driven development, or dynamic systems development method, and you find these

light methods are inadequate for your large project, dependable requirements, and motley team then repeat after me: “I, (state your name) am a lightweight infidel. I promise to follow the 12 Steps for Lightweights.”

## 12 Steps for Lightweights

1. I admit I was powerless over change, and my life had become unmanageable.
2. I believe that a power greater than ingenuity could restore me to sanity.
3. I made a decision to turn my will and my career over to the care of prescriptive processes and best practice models.
4. I searched and made a fearless inventory of my process areas and maturity.
5. I admit to my manager, SEPG, and quality assurance department the exact nature of my wrongs.
6. I am entirely ready to have quantitative management and optimization remove my defects.
7. I humbly ask assessments, inspections, and quality assurance to reveal my shortcomings.
8. I made a list of all process areas I neglected, and I am willing to make amends to them all.
9. I will make amends to my process areas wherever possible, except when to do so would injure the budget, in which case I will request a waiver.
10. I will continue to assess my maturity and when I deviate, I will promptly conform.
11. I will seek through documentation and meetings to improve my conscious contact with “The Model” asking only for knowledge of its will for me and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a disciplined awakening, I will carry this message to lightweight infidels and to practice these principles in all my affairs.

Since the majority of the industry has considerable investment in heavyweight methods and will likely dismiss the agile movement as a return to callow software programming, I offer you the following athletic afflatu.

In planning for one of the most grueling events, the Tour de France, Lance Armstrong starts preparations a year in advance. He does not prepare for a specific race but instead prepares for several race scenarios and his ability to adapt to them. That is important because as soon as the race starts, the event will take its own course and any planning will be history. He knows the course, conditions, and competitors are unpredictable and his success depends on knowing what is going on and responding quickly.

Software development, although not the Tour de France, is far from predictable and would benefit from the insight of one of the greatest athletes in the world. Although not a panacea, these pellucid ideas, if allowed to imbue the mind, will ameliorate your software organization. Go ahead. Break from the peloton.

— Gary Petersen  
Shim Enterprise, Inc.

