

❖ Consultants in Minnesota ❖

November 2001

President's Message

By Randy Hayman

Greetings All!

First, I'd like to thank Amy McKenna for sponsoring last month's featured presentation on an 'agile', or 'light-weight' software engineering methodology, 'eXtreme Programming' (an original use of the term XP). The presentation was given by Susan Standiford, Director of Engineering at Retek. This presentation was one of the most participatory question and answer sessions I've attended at an ICCA monthly meeting. Thank you Amy and Susan!

November's meeting will feature a presentation by the long-time InfoWorld columnist, Bob Lewis. Be sure not to miss this one either!

Bob will talk about spotting upcoming trends that you can use in your business growth - spotting trends for fun and profit.

We are still moving forward with the local website initiative. We still will be bringing forward a vote on the by-law changes for our chapter, once approved by National. Look forward to voting on the amendments. The proposed amendments will put our chapter in step with National as far as elections and tenure of officers goes, making it much easier for our chapter

officers to serve on National boards and committees to assist in the direction of ICCA. The proposed amendments will protect our individual chapter's identity and enable us to remain strong in the coming years.

Again, feel free to let Amy McKenna (contact information to the left of this column) know the details of the special presentation you have arranged for our chapter.

Note that this month's meeting has been the subject of some confusion. It will be on 15 November at the Wyndham Garden Hotel.

The December Christmas gathering will be held at the Steak and Ale near 494 & Penn Avenue. The Christmas gathering will celebrate our local Chapter's 20th Anniversary.

That's the view from here. Let me know your thoughts by sending me email at haymanr@icca.org.

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INDEPENDENT
COMPUTER
CONSULTANTS
ASSOCIATION

Newsletter
of the



Minnesota Chapter

Miscellaneous Pet Peeves.

By Randy Hayman ICCA-MN, president

Consulting can be a very funny business. The dichotomy of the Information Technology field can be very striking - most technical problems aren't technical problems but people problems. My pet peeves, sometimes funny, sometimes not; sometimes technical, sometimes personable; so bear with me while I share with you some of them from years spent on all sides of the Information Technology space.

In no particular order, here's a current list of things that make me cringe:

(1) Readme files, help text, or user documentation that doesn't tell you what the product actually does. Have you ever come across something like this? Note that this is an actual cut-and-paste from the product description document (with vendors and the product masked):

"We're glad you have chosen <vendor-1>, <vendor-2>, and <vendor-3> to Revolutionize the Way You Communicate.

If you wish to setup <product> for use with mime extensions to allow users to use their Netscape browser, run the script "mailcap.sh" from the bin directory of the freshly installed <product>. This will add the '<product>' mime type. You may also want to configure your browser to accept "<.product-extension>" files as being <product> files.

<product> accepts files of the following syntax from the command line:
..."

WOW! What a description of this product, why, we can almost determine what this is useful for! Lack of space in this newsletter keeps this to

but a single example. There are countless examples of such fine documentation.

(2) Documentation distributed with the product that is a folder full of HTML documents - especially when index.html is not one of them. I have yet to meet a monitor with enough real-estate to allow me to simultaneously comprehend as much online documentation as what I can put on my physical work surface, no matter how small that work surface may be. Perhaps when IBM's new 204-pixel-per-inch (3840x2400, roughly 11x18") "Bertha" monitor comes down from it's \$35,000 price tag and becomes affordable this may change. Note that 200-pixels-per-inch is the point when displays look like paper.

(3) Software installations that force install to an installation directory that the software chooses, disallowing the user from making that choice. Remember I'm one of those organized individuals that installs only the Windows operating system on C:. I also keep only my *ix boot files in /boot and only a minimum of configuration files and executables in /. I believe the concept of partitions is to partition content.

(4) Mis-used terminology. For example, I have had a contracting gig at a Company whose employees called the tower computer case of their PCs the 'hard drive'. Virtually everyone, from the help desk, managers, and IT staffers that I worked with on that project used that term. Though, as a conscientious consultant, I did alter my terminology as appropriate so I could communicate effectively with them.

(5) Finger prints, grease, smudges, etc... on monitors. Acch! Glare can be bad enough without those distracting smudges.

(6) Underconfigured hardware. Hardware is magnitudes cheaper than the cost of delays and people costs. Case in point: Today I looked up the price of PC memory from a local retailer (on University Avenue in Minneapolis, near the University). Major brand 256MB PC133 SDRAM 168-pin DIMMS for \$18.89 for the first DIMM, additional DIMMs for \$21.99. That's \$85.00 plus tax for 1GB of RAM for your late-model PC if your machine can hold 4 DIMMs. Note that if your machine has PC100 memory in it, you can replace it all with PC133 with no problems - just don't mix DIMM speeds. If your pagefile or swapfile ever gets used, you are wasting time waiting for your computer - shouldn't your computer wait for you?

(7) Conscientiously making an inappropriate decision to prove a point to someone else, whereby wasting too much time, effort, and respect.

I'm sure you have a few pet peeves of your own. I'd even bet you have some very funny stories to tell from your consulting practice. Feel free to share them by writing an article for a future newsletter.

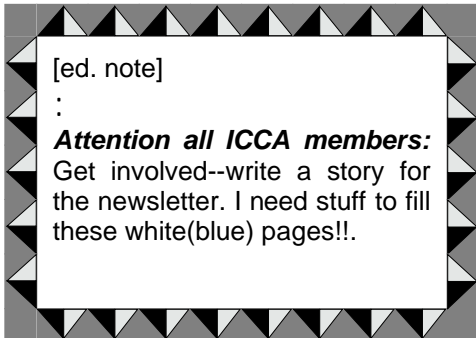


Riding the Wave: Trend Spotting for Fun and Profit

How can you tell which of the zillion technologies that you read about in the technical press have a chance of succeeding in the marketplace?'

Earlier this year Bob Lewis, the featured presenter for November's meeting, joined the ranks of 'the downsized', having worked as a consultant for Perot Systems. He is now president of ITCatalysts, an independent consultancy specializing in IT effectiveness and strategic alignment.

Bob has been writing for InfoWorld for years, and continues to write the 'Survival Guide' column for InfoWorld. Read his latest column at http://www.infoworld.com/community/t_opinions.html, and look for 'Bob Lewis' or 'Survival Guide'.



**Visitors at the ICCA Minnesota meeting
Wednesday October 17, 2001**

A hearty welcome to our visitors at the ICCA meeting October 17, 2001. We all hope you will visit again and become part of our association:

Guests attending:

- Joel Schneider
- Bill Fremming
- LeRoy Michaelson
- Tamara Paulson
- Steven Mooney

Joel Schneider

A guest at ICCA Minnesota meeting of October 17, 2001

As a software developer with over 10 years of professional experience, Joel has worked with a range of different technologies and industries. His most recent work has involved Java (J2EE) web based systems that interact with relational databases. Joel has only recently begun to seriously explore the world of independent consulting. His resume can be viewed at:

<http://www.effectivetechservices.com/resume/schneider-joel/>.



Meeting Reservations: Members may phone your reservation to Joan Barnes at 651-257-2570, **by 3:00 PM, Monday November 12, 2001**. Non-members should mail this form to: ICCA Minnesota, c/o Norm Nelson, 2200 E 22nd St. Minneapolis, MN 55404-3165

Name: _____ Company: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____
 State: _____ Phone: () _____

Menu Selection: Chicken Dijonaise, London Broil
 Beef Stroganoff

Members \$25 Non-members \$28 x _____ = _____
 Late Charge \$2 x _____ = _____
 Enclosed is a check for: _____



Next Meeting

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Riding the Wave: Trend Spotting for Fun and Profit

Wyndham Garden Hotel

4460 W 78th St. Circle
952-831-3131

Social Hour at 5:30PM
Dinner at 6:30PM

For reservations call
Joan Barnes @ 651-257-2570

FUTURE MEETINGS

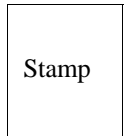
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