

# COMMENT

## FROM THE EDITOR

I'm going to go out on a limb and paraphrase my worthy predecessor, John Shafer. In his farewell in the last issue, John put forth an admonition for HF/E practitioners: Whether explicitly or implicitly, you follow a methodology to do the good work you do, so you might as well acknowledge that fact and document the methodology so the rest of us can follow along. I'd like to take that one step further. This homework assignment John has given doesn't have to be a creativity-sapping, mind-numbing, or onerous obligation. Since jumping into my current assignment in my day job (usability engineering/HCI design consulting), I've come to subscribe to an amplification of John's point: Following and documenting a rigorous development methodology isn't just necessary; it can be profitable and . . . fun!

**A rigorous development methodology can be profitable and . . . fun!**

Documentation of formal steps taken in each design project accumulates, and the resulting intellectual capital makes you more and more efficient with each new project. Also, aside from the obvious value of seeing how your predecessors solved similar problems, a scrupulously maintained database of lessons learned during each engagement can save your organization a lot of trouble down the road. And your potential clients will be surprisingly receptive to a bit of a description of your methodology when you're pitching your wares; you will exude a reassuring aura of credibility.

You may say, "So, it's profitable. That's sort of obvious, but didn't I hear the word 'fun' bandied about?" Don't limit your creative energies to what you see on the glass; there are plenty of exciting challenges on the other side of the process too. The methodologies you use can't be merely a static set of rules and procedures; they form an organic body of experience that must continually grow or become stagnant, irrelevant, and possibly even dangerous. What can we extract from our experiences on this project to help with the next one? How can we generalize the tools we developed here to give our colleagues a competitive advantage on the next go-round? My own team – bicoastal telecommuters that we are – always make it a point to get together face-to-face a couple of times a year to swap war stories and fertilize this methodology that feeds us the rest of the year (and it doesn't hurt that we usually try to do this in some attractive vacation spot). So, is the care and feeding of a formal development methodology fun? You bet – it's a hoot!

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John Shafer closed his last Comment with a thank-you to the people who make this publication happen. Even though I'm still wet behind the ears around here, it is patently clear to me that there is a lot of wonderful energy and enterprise pouring into this magazine. Your associate editors, development editors, and department editors are motivated, helpful, and smart, and I can't say enough nice things about Lois, Den'Al, Lynn and all the capable folks in the HFES central office.

Let me close with this thought: I've known John for many years now, and I've always admired the heart and intelligence he has applied to *EID*. But having glimpsed what he's been doing behind the scenes to make this happen, I am doubly impressed and indebted to him for leaving me such a fine-tuned machine. Thank you, John! (And, don't go away, I have a few questions . . .)

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