

A Comment on a Book Review

CMMI: Guidelines for Process Integration and Product Improvement

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Editor's Note

In September we posted a review of *CMMI: Guidelines for Process Integration and Product Improvement* written by Paul Harmon. The authors of the book prepared a response, but it wasn't in time for inclusion in the September posting, so we are reproducing it as a separate note. After October, we will attach the response to the book review itself, so anyone downloading the review in the future can see both the review and the response.

The Author's Response

Thank you for reviewing our book and for giving us the opportunity to respond to your comments. After reading your review, we realized that your expectations for the book varied from the vision we had for the book. Our purpose in writing this book was to provide a single source for all CMMI® model information. We wanted to help CMMI users make their selection of one or both of the two model representations over time, when they knew more about CMMI best practices and how they might best be applied in their organization. We also wanted to provide a complete and understandable description of what CMMI is all about.

Please understand that CMMI, as well as other CMM®s, were developed to be used with judgment in the context of the organization's unique environment. The power of CMMI is that it can be flexibly and purposefully implemented by organizations to achieve their business objectives. CMMs are not how-to manuals that provide a step-by-step method to achieve process improvement because such a cookie-cutter approach doesn't address the individual needs of organizations or support the dynamic environments organizations must cope with daily. In other words, CMMI best practices do not judge or recommend particular approaches or tools for achieving CMMI practices and goals (e.g., Six Sigma, ERP, etc.).

Organizations have business objectives that are unique and that change over time. The decision on what method is best to help them achieve their business objectives and CMMI best practices, rests with the organization. The widespread adoption of CMMI has confirmed our belief in this approach. Although CMMI has been widely available less than two years, over 9000 people have attended Introduction to CMMI training. There are over 200 lead appraisers authorized to objectively appraise organizations using CMMI models. There are over 100 organizations licensed by the SEISM that are providing services that support CMMI-based process improvement.

CMMI has been applied in different industries by organizations of different sizes in different cultures. For example, CMMI has been adopted by organizations in the U.S., India, Japan, Australia, France, and other countries. Organizations in automotive, consumer electronics, aerospace, defense, telecommunications, finance, insurance, health care, and other areas have adopted CMMI in addition to traditional audiences of process improvement such as software development and information technology organizations. Huge multi-national corporations as well as small corporations employing less than 100 people have adopted CMMI. You can see the overall picture of CMMI adoption in the CMMI Maturity Profile on the SEI Web site (<http://www.sei.cmu.edu/sema/profile.html>).

Comparing CMMI best practices to other process improvement vehicles, such as ISO and Six Sigma, is a great idea for a future book. Initially, however, we did not include this information because CMMI is relatively new. We also believe that comparisons made by impartial and objective sources are the most credible and reliable for this kind of information. We do, therefore, provide links to the SEI Web site (www.sei.cmu.edu) in the book where mappings and comparisons of CMMI to other process improvement methods developed by knowledgeable and objective sources are provided as they become available.

The intuitive nature of CMMI and its flexibility are no accident. You are right about the special vocabulary used by the CMM. CMMI has reversed the trend by selecting, where possible, terminology that is not discipline-specific or CMM-specific. We hope that you and others will find that CMMI is easier for the layman to pick up and read than older CMMs.

As CMMI continues to be used throughout the world, we will learn more about how organizations are choosing to implement CMMI best practices. Then, perhaps, we can recommend tools, approaches, methods, and strategies for effective CMMI-based process improvement programs. Until then, we will rely on the knowledge within the organization to decide what is best for them.

Thanks again for your review and the opportunity to respond.

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