



# The High-Performing Contractor Assessment Program Update

August 2004

This Update provides information regarding the SMACNA High-Performing Contractor Assessment Model and its categories.

## \*\*\*\*\* SMACNA Sponsored Overviews

The following SMACNA-sponsored events include an overview of the High-Performing Contractor Assessment Model:

### Chicagoland Sheet Metal Contractors

Association	September 16, 2004
SMACNA - Kansas City Chapter	September 30, 2004

Depending on the chapter needs, Dennis Sowards is available for one-to-four hour consulting sessions. If you are interested with having your chapter sponsor an overview of the High-Performing Contractor Assessment Model, contact Tom Soles at SMACNA National or your local SMACNA chapter executive.

## \*\*\*\*\* High-Performance Leadership

An effective vision statement includes these important elements:

- How it is created;
- How it is communicated; and
- How it is lived.

Last month we discussed how to create your vision. The next element for discussion is *how it is communicated*.

**How to communicate your vision** - Many managers believe that effective communication is simply telling their employees their vision statement. While formally explaining the company's vision is important, effective communication is not a one-time event. Employees need to see, hear, and experience the vision often.

The vision statement should be posted around the company to remind everyone of where the company is going. Put it on the wall, at the sites, in the shops, put it where it stands out and can be seen. One company said that floor mats work well because people notice wording on floor mats better than on walls. Displaying the vision statement can be creative in its approach. Put the message on paycheck envelopes, at the top of meeting agendas, on business letterhead, or on the start-up screen for company computers. One company put it on its mouse pads; another created a simple jingle to share their vision. Don't do every place at once; periodically change the location or way the vision is displayed.

More than just seeing the vision statement, employees need to hear it. They need to hear the company leaders talk about how it was created, the meaning behind the words, and why the

company is going in that direction. Most of all, employees need to hear the passion behind the words. Just as ways to see the vision should vary, the ways and frequency of how employees hear it should also vary. Initially, the vision should be introduced by the owner/president in a formal face-to-face meeting. After this meeting, each department manager or supervisor should follow up with a discussion about how his/her department can and will contribute to achieving the vision. All senior level managers should talk about the vision as they meet with employees in formal or informal settings. A great tool is to develop and deliver the 'elevator speech.' This is a message about the vision that can be delivered in the time one would ride up several floors in an elevator – short and to the point! Each manager doesn't have to use the exact same speech but can use the same key points in a brief message to every employee every time opportunity presents itself.

Experiencing the vision is the most critical part of communication because we learn best by observation and example. If an employee experiences a decision being made where the vision was used as the context, that employee learns more than all the posters or handouts in the world. If an employee is recognized for doing something that demonstrates the vision, it will be remembered long after all the speeches and PowerPoint presentations are forgotten.

More will follow next month on experiencing the vision when *how it is lived* is discussed.

## \*\*\*\*\* Process Management

Frank Patrick writes about managing software projects; however, read how his words fit construction projects:

*"There's never time to do it right, but there's always time to do it over." If you've ever uttered that time-worn sentiment, stated with an air of exasperation (or muttered under your breath), then you're probably familiar with rework. The need to re-do something is rooted in one of two possibilities. Either it was not done right the first time, or something has changed to make the original attempt less than fully useful. While there could be a number of reasons for either (Murphy's Law has not yet been repealed, after all), there are several common practices of project management that can actually contribute to rework.*

*One source of self-inflicted wounds is the misuse of estimates used to build schedules and make promises. Too often, estimates are single numbers (or are transformed into single numbers by some sort of "best-case-worst-case-most-likely" PERT calculation), that reflect the best guess as to how long a task is expected to take, given available information. Estimates are*



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*asked for long before many of the details of the project are really understood. This is the nature of planning and promising in many organizations.*

*Unfortunately, the foot shooting continues: estimates get translated to commitments, and are published as schedules that link the string of estimated tasks to the calendar. Now there's a due date for every task that, if exceeded, means the project promise is in jeopardy. Pressure to meet that due date -- to keep the project on track -- can overwhelm even the strongest desire to handoff a quality deliverable to successor tasks. The rush job comes back to haunt you as you do the rework, which takes more time than estimated, plus the additional re-setup; or users do the rework, adding to their effort and the chance of handing off their output late.*

*A second source of rework is created when work is started too soon. Too soon sometimes means before somebody else's handoffs are ready. If you start without a full set of required inputs, you will find yourself making assumptions. Those assumptions could be wrong.*

*Too soon can also mean before it's needed. Just because you have all the inputs that were identified in the initial planning doesn't mean you should jump on it immediately. Often, that is the appropriate action, but there are also situations in which you could invest effort prematurely, only to find that some other part of the project has changed circumstances. Your good planned work is now either less than what is needed or something the project doesn't need at all. While that last possibility doesn't directly relate to rework, it is just as wasteful if you had other, more valuable things to do with your time.*

*The Added Work of Rework  
February 17, 2004*

resources' dependencies and focus on the handoffs (rules of release).

- Question assumptions about "necessary" handoffs between tasks. Validate what inputs are really needed to move the task forward.
- Don't start a task that is not ready to be done.

### \*\*\*\*\* Keeping Score

Hal Macomber suggests this method of keeping score of project work.

*If you aren't measuring, then you can't know if you are improving. We've come to learn that on projects reliability of planning is more important than productivity of work groups. But are you measuring reliability? No! Start now.*

*Measuring reliability is a simple process. Start by meeting with your team on an everyday basis for just a few minutes. I recommend doing this at the end of the day. Schedule the meeting for 5 minutes. During this meeting you have one question. "Did you finish what you promised to finish today?" The only allowed answers are "Yes" or "No." Record the answers on a graph. The graph doesn't need to be fancy. Flip chart paper will do. Add to the graph each day. Record the result for your team as a percent. 5 tasks finished out of 7 promised to finish is 71%. Plot that on a graph. No credit for progress or for performing work that was not promised. The point of this exercise is to improve planning reliability.*

*Check back next week for uncovering the reasons for unreliability.*

*Reforming Project Management  
- Bloglet, June 30, 2004*

Frank Patrick's suggestions for attacking rework are:

- Get rid of task due dates on a schedule. The only real due dates are those the project team promised to those outside of the team. Instead, make tasks ready and perform them without self-inflicted due dates.
- Develop a clear understanding of the major interdependencies between tasks. Know which task has

For more information about the High-Performing Contractor assessment process, contact Dennis Sowards (telephone: 480 835 1185; e-mail: [dennis@YourQSS.com](mailto:dennis@YourQSS.com)) or Tom Soles (telephone: 703 803 2988; e-mail: [tsoles@smacna.org](mailto:tsoles@smacna.org)).