

# THE HINDU Business Line

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## Are your people ready for mature content?

D. Murali

*How do you implement improved workforce practices? Here's more on people CMM for software organisations.*

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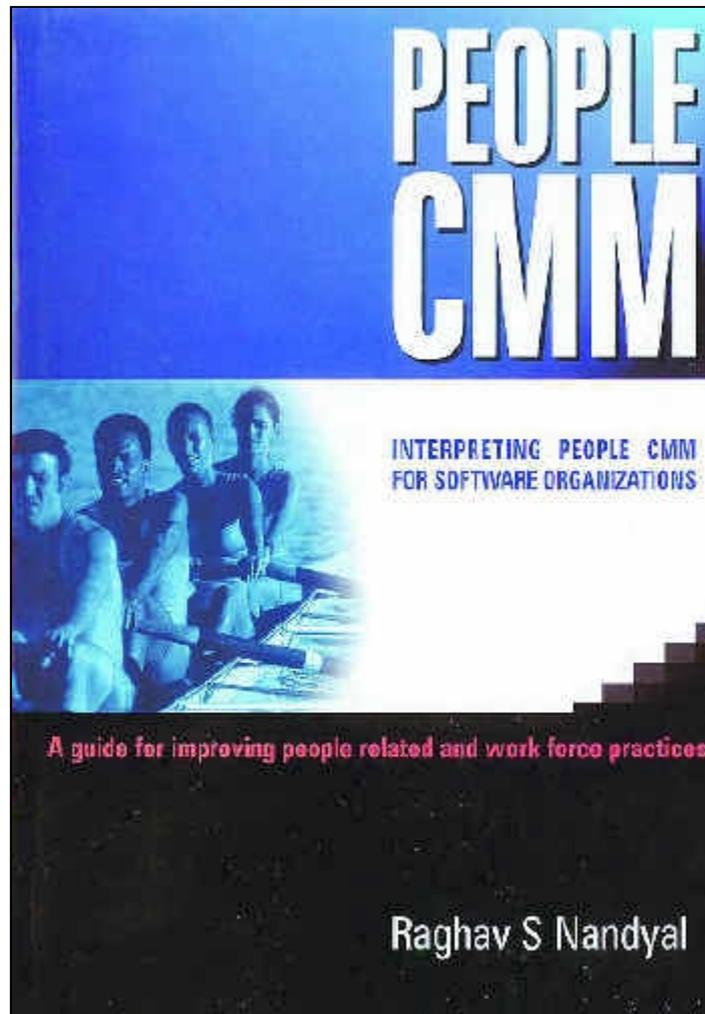
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BEFORE Arnie became a candidate for elections, he was Terminator; and before that Conan the Barbarian. Likewise, CMM (short for Capability Maturity Model) has been continually maturing. Watts Humphrey and his colleagues at IBM developed the original concept for the CMM in the early 1980s. The concept, in simple terms, is that the quality of the product is related directly to the quality of the process used to develop

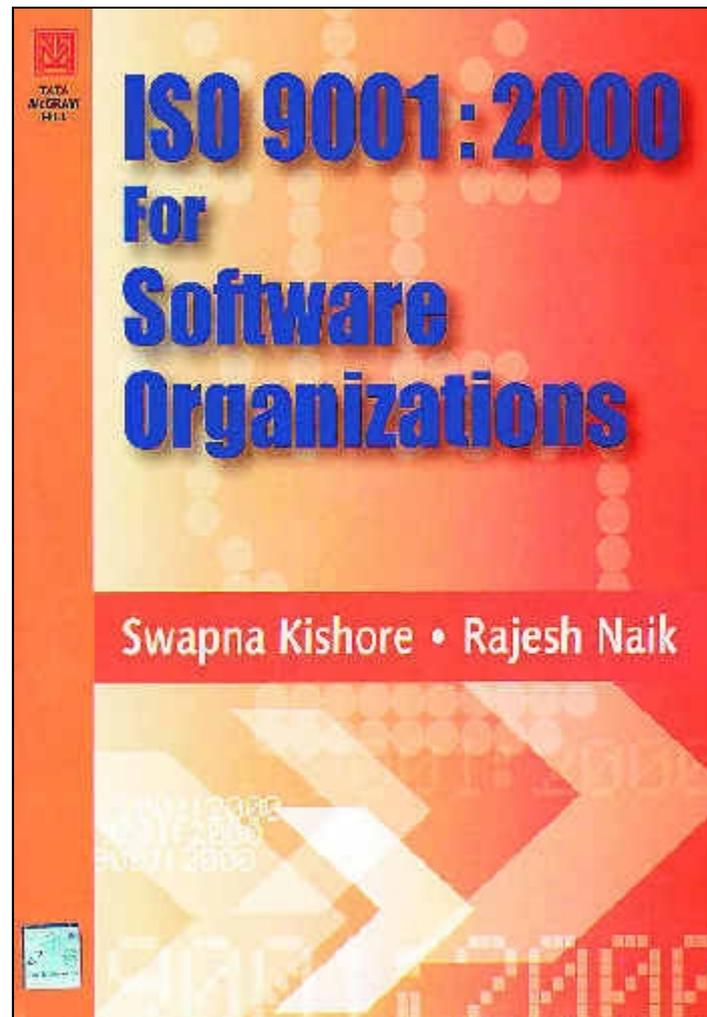
- **The Hindu eBooks**

it. Then came SW-CMM for software, P-CMM for people and so on. The Software Engineering Institute of Carnegie Mellon University defines People Capability Maturity Model (People CMM) as an organisational change model designed on the premise that improved workforce practices will not survive unless an organisation's behaviour changes to support them. Raghav S. Nandyal's book "People CMM" is a guide for improving people-related and workforce practices and seeks to interpret people CMM for software organisations. Read on:

- People CMM practices have little applicability to organisations that are either complacent by virtue of being too unmanageable or have a hard time dealing with empowering individuals like government operations and government-owned businesses with deeply entrenched notions of hierarchies and seniority rather than merits of knowledge and application of skills and talent.
- People CMM is organised into five maturity levels: Initial, repeatable (renamed as managed), defined, managed (renamed as predictable) and optimising. Each maturity level is made of a group of process areas. A process area is a collection of practices which, when established, fulfils the purpose and therefore the accomplishment of goals leading to the establishment of organisational maturity.
- There are managers who are the typical Type A bosses, seen to be stepping on the toes of engineers, modifying designs without adequate rationale and virtually handing out instructions for how things ought to be done. A deep sense of insecurity could be the reason for "It is my way or take the highway!" This leads to a high churn rate that further deteriorates competency development.
- A higher process capability communication and coordination process area becomes visible when people feel and exhibit an open sense of loyalty to their employer and to the group they belong. Employee suggestions for change or about circumstances are automatic and forthcoming - as if it was their birthright. One does not need to goad people into speaking up.
- Knowledge is represented as two components in Chinese Kanji characters. The first pictogram depicts a child standing under the roof of a school - the learning component. The second pictogram depicts a baby bird struggling to fly out of the nest for the first time - the practice component. Any organisation can be at level 5 for just five minutes. Only an empowered workforce can make the day-to-day changes that are required to operate and keep a level 5 process at level 5 for more than five minutes.

***CMM (that is, come, make the most of) People-CMM.***

**In search of quality**



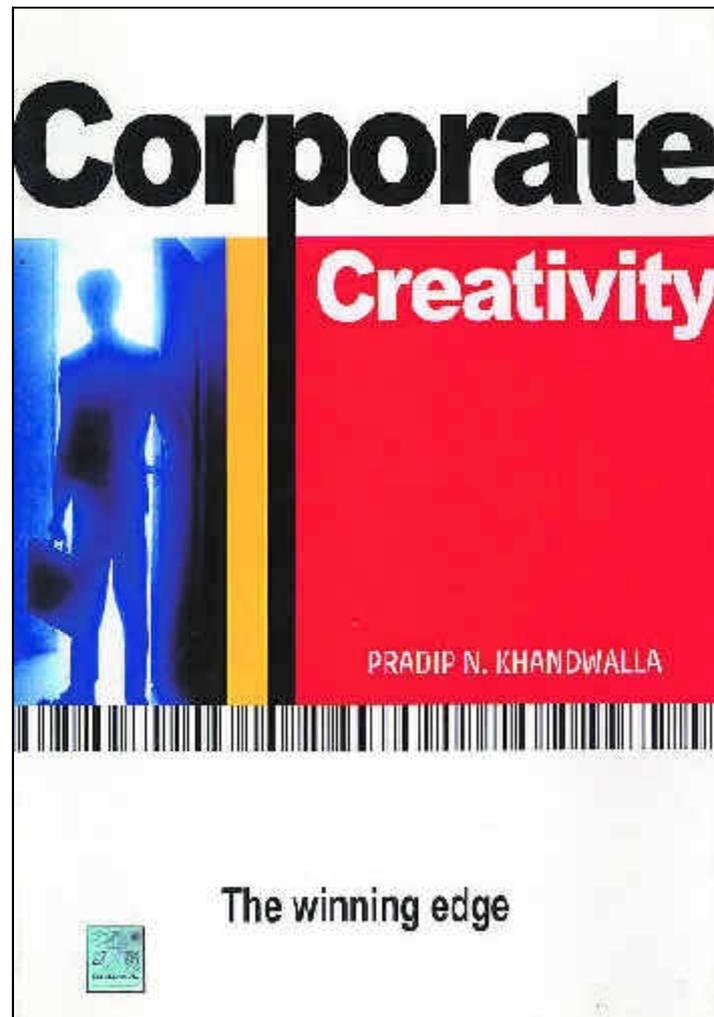
Latin's *qualis*, meaning 'of what kind', lies at the root of the word quality. ISO 9000:2000 defines quality as the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfils requirements. ISO 9001:2000 is the standard to which organisations can be assessed and certified. It is the standard that is used by third part assessors for certification. Its predecessor was the 1994 version. The book "ISO 9001:2000 for Software Organizations" by Swapna Kishore and Rajesh Naik is aimed at providing assistance to companies that have to upgrade from ISO 9001:1994. The ISO 9001:2000 is a generic standard applicable to all types of industries. It is written in a semi-legal language, observe the authors. "While this provides the precision required in an auditable standard, it makes understanding and implementing the standard very difficult." So, some help:

- Quality management system (QMS) helps organisations achieve quality objectives. It also provides a framework for continual improvement so that the satisfaction of customers and other stakeholders can be enhanced. Since QMS derives from and has to be consistent with the quality policy, its approach starts with establishing the quality policy. The needs and expectations of customers and other stakeholders are determined.

- The new standard requires procedures that explicitly cover six areas. These are: document control, control of records, internal audits, control of non-conforming products, corrective actions and preventive actions. The 1994 standard required documented procedures for more areas.
- One important concept while monitoring and controlling a project is that of using thresholds. If thresholds are defined while planning, these can be used while monitoring to decide whether action is required for a deviation. Exceeding the threshold becomes the trigger for identifying and taking action.
- While selecting the software subcontractor, special attention has to be paid to the process that the subcontractor uses for performing software engineering and management activities. This is because software quality is best assured by using a good software process.
- The certificate issued for conformity to ISO 9001:2000 is a time-bound certificate. Typically, it is valid up to three years subject to the organisation satisfactorily passing the periodic surveillance audits that the certification body requires. Such audits are done every six months to ensure that the organisation continues to conform to the requirements of the standard.

*Join the quality queue.*

What's new?



To thrive tomorrow, we need to create visionaries today who can see and seize opportunities and not be daunted to be petrified by the adversities. Thus exhorts the back cover of "Corporate Creativity - the Winning Edge" by Pradip N. Khandwalla. "We need to better understand the nature of creativity in the workplace," urges the author. There's more:

- Mechanisms of divergent thinking consist of ways by which the mind generates novel, imaginative, offbeat, and unusual alternatives. Listing of alternatives without evaluating them is a powerful mechanism of divergent thinking. Another way of generating novel ideas is to take the currently accepted solution to a problem and ask what its opposite could be.
- Aer Lingus of Ireland used its airline computerisation skills for marketing turnkey reservation systems. It utilised its engine overhauling capabilities by opening an overhauling plant to service other airlines. Leveraging its personnel management strengths, the airline took a contract to equip and manage a hospital in Baghdad, and a contract for the management of nursing homes in the UK. In the age of outsourcing, in-sourcing, that is, taking in outside business by leveraging the organisation's functional management strengths, opens up a new way of growing.

- Peter Drucker has discussed three forms of innovations-based competitive strategy. The first is the 'fastest with the mostest', where the organisation keeps innovating pioneering new products or services and eliminates competition for a while. The second is 'creative imitation', where the organisation leverages some other organisation's innovation, and comes up with a product or service whose uses were not intended by the original innovator. The third is 'entrepreneurial judo' where the organisation identifies a neglected niche to dominate.
- Intrapreneurship is internal entrepreneurship. The way it works is by the management making it known that it will entertain any novel product idea, even if it is a far out one, from its employees, and indeed also outsiders.
- The leader need not personally be very creative. But it is important that he/she respects and understands creativity, and regards as a chief task the nurturance and evocation of creativity in team members.

***So, you have a choice - to be creative or to be a leader.***

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