FOREWORD

In 1997 I started working with Raghav and have always appreciated his professional approach to software process improvement (SPI) in general and assessments and appraisals in particular. I was very pleased when Raghav asked me to review this book and I believe that readers who are serious about doing appraisals and doing them well will find many useful ideas and suggestions which will provide them with "points to ponder", as Raghav would say.

In the twenty-three years I have been doing various types of assessments and appraisals it has always been clear that organizations will best receive the assessment results if they can clearly relate to the findings and if they can see value from the findings. If the report is merely showing compliance with a model it may satisfy some need for achieving a specific maturity level, but will typically not meet the expectations of the practitioners. Raghav makes it very clear that judgments need to be made during an appraisal and shown in the appraisal report. He also stresses that the appraisal team needs to have the knowledge, skills, and experience to make valid judgments.

In my experience, just checking to see that a process is documented and followed is only a small part of an appraisal. If the process is ineffective or inefficient it may satisfy the model but not the business and probably not the practitioners. One must also carefully examine the degree of rigor in the process and ensure that for the characteristics of the project there is an appropriate degree of rigor being applied. For example, if a project will be critical when operational, there should typically be more rigour in the process than when it would not be critical. There is a need for competent appraisers applying judgments to provide these types of findings.

Raghav's suggestion to leverage process improvement and appraisals by integrating the People CMM and the CMMI is important not only for cost reasons but to minimize the impact on the organization. Process and technology both require people to apply them. Therefore competent and motivated people are really the key to success. Even if you choose not to use the People CMM you must still address many of the practices to be successful with both process improvement and the business.

His approach to ensuring sufficient rigor in Class C and Class B appraisals along with reasonable time constraints is another important factor since the reuse of appraisal artifacts will reduce both the cost and the impact on the organization. Reducing the impact on the organization is an important part of conducting an appraisal since it will reflect positively on the appraisal process and therefore the report is likely to be received more favorably.

Throughout the book Raghav describes various approaches to appraisals that will make them more efficient and more effective. The points he makes have been proven to work during real appraisals by Raghav and by others. His approach is a practical way to help with process improvement. I expect that you will enjoy this book and the "points to ponder" as much as I have.

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July 2006
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