



Lecture 9: Inspections & Reviews

- Types of Inspection
- Benefits of Inspection
 - ↳ Inspection is more cost effective than testing
- How to conduct an inspection
 - ↳ who to invite
 - ↳ how to structure it
- Some tips



Reviews, Inspections, Walkthroughs...

→ Note: these terms are not widely agreed

- ↳ formality
 - informal: from meetings over coffee, to regular team meetings
 - formal: scheduled meetings, prepared participants, defined agenda, specific format, documented output
- ↳ "Management reviews"
 - E.g. preliminary design review (PDR), critical design review (CDR), ...
 - Used to provide confidence that the design is sound
 - Attended by management and sponsors (customers)
 - Usually a "dog-and-pony show"
- ↳ "Walkthroughs"
 - developer technique (usually informal)
 - used by development teams to improve quality of product
 - focus is on finding defects
- ↳ "(Fagan) Inspections"
 - a process management tool (always formal)
 - used to improve quality of the development process
 - collect defect data to analyze the quality of the process
 - written output is important
 - major role in training junior staff and transferring expertise



Benefits of formal inspection

Source: Adapted from Blum, 1992, Freedman and Weinberg, 1990, & notes from Philip Johnson.

- For applications programming:
 - ↳ most reviewed programs run correctly first time
 - compare: 10-50 attempts for test/debug approach
- Data from large projects
 - ↳ Data from Bell-Northern Research:
 - Inspection cost: 1 hour per defect.
 - Testing cost: 2-4 hours per defect.
 - Post-release cost: 33 hours per defect.
 - ↳ error reduction by a factor of 5; (10 in some reported cases)
 - ↳ improvement in productivity: 14% to 25%
 - ↳ percentage of errors found by inspection: 58% to 82%
 - ↳ cost reduction of 50%-80% for V&V (even including cost of inspection)
- Effects on staff competence:
 - ↳ increased morale, reduced turnover
 - ↳ better estimation and scheduling (more knowledge about defect profiles)
 - ↳ better management recognition of staff ability



Constraints

Source: Adapted from Blum, 1992, pp369-373 & Freedman and Weinberg, 1990.

- Size
 - ↳ "enough people so that all the relevant expertise is available"
 - ↳ min: 3 (4 if author is present)
 - ↳ max: 7 (less if leader is inexperienced)
- Duration
 - ↳ never more than 2 hours
 - concentration will flag if longer
- Outputs
 - ↳ all reviewers must agree on the result
 - accept or re-work or re-inspect
 - ↳ all findings should be documented
 - summary report (for management)
 - detailed list of issues
- Scope
 - ↳ focus on small part of a design, not the whole thing
 - ↳ Fagan recommends rates:
 - 130-150 SLOC per hour
- Timing
 - ↳ Examines a product once its author has finished it
 - ↳ not too soon
 - product not ready - find problems the author is already aware of
 - ↳ not too late
 - product in use - errors are now very costly to fix



Choosing Reviewers

Source: Adapted from Freedman and Weinberg, 1990.

→ Possibilities

- ↳ specialists in reviewing (e.g. QA people)
- ↳ people from the same team as the author
- ↳ people invited for specialist expertise
- ↳ people with an interest in the product
- ↳ visitors who have something to contribute
- ↳ people from other parts of the organization

→ Exclude

- ↳ anyone responsible for reviewing the author
 - i.e. line manager, appraiser, etc.
- ↳ anyone with known personality clashes with other reviewers
- ↳ anyone who is not qualified to contribute
- ↳ all management
- ↳ anyone whose presence creates a conflict of interest



Roles

Source: Adapted from Blum, 1992, pp369-373

Formal Walkthrough

→ Review Leader

- ↳ chairs the meeting
- ↳ ensures preparation is done
- ↳ keeps review focussed
- ↳ reports the results

→ Recorder

- ↳ keeps track of issues raised

→ Reader

- ↳ summarizes the product piece by piece during the review

→ Author

- ↳ should actively participate (may be the reader)

→ Other Reviewers

- ↳ task is to find and report issues

Fagan Inspection

→ Moderator

- ↳ must be a competent programmer
- ↳ should be specially trained
- ↳ could be from another project

→ Designer

- ↳ programmer who produced the design being inspected

→ Coder/Implementor

- ↳ programmer responsible for translating the design to code

→ Tester

- ↳ person responsible for writing/executing test cases



Guidelines

Source: Adapted from Freedman and Weinberg, 1990.

→ Prior to the review

- ↳ schedule Formal Reviews into the project planning
- ↳ train all reviewers
- ↳ ensure all attendees prepare in advance

→ During the review

- ↳ review the product, not its author
 - keep comments constructive, professional and task-focussed
- ↳ stick to the agenda
 - leader must prevent drift
- ↳ limit debate and rebuttal
 - record issues for later discussion/resolution
- ↳ identify problems but don't try to solve them
- ↳ take written notes

→ After the review

- ↳ review the review process



Opening Moments

Source: Adapted from Wiegers 2001.

1) Don't start until everyone is present

2) Leader announces:

"We are here to review product X for purpose Y"

3) Leader introduces the reviewers, and explains the recording technique

4) Leader briefly reviews the materials

- ↳ check that everyone received them
- ↳ check that everyone prepared

5) Leader explains the type of review

Note: The review should not go ahead if:

- ↳ some reviewers are missing
- ↳ some reviewers didn't receive the materials
- ↳ some reviewers didn't prepare



Structuring the inspection

→ Checklist

- ☞ uses a checklist of questions/issues
- ☞ review structured by issue on the list

→ Walkthrough

- ☞ one person presents the product step-by-step
- ☞ review is structured by the product

→ Round Robin

- ☞ each reviewer in turn gets to raise an issue
- ☞ review is structured by the review team

→ Speed Review

- ☞ each reviewer gets 3 minutes to review a chunk, then passes to the next person
- ☞ good for assessing comprehensibility!



Fagan Inspection Process

Source: Adapted from Blum, 1992, pp374-375

1 Overview

- ☞ communicate and educate about product
- ☞ circulate materials
- ☞ Rate: 500 SLOC per hour

2 Preparation

- ☞ All participants perform individually
- ☞ review materials to detect defects
- ☞ Rate: 100-125 SLOC per hour

3 Inspection

- ☞ a reader paraphrases the design
- ☞ identify and note problems (don't solve them)
- ☞ Rate: 130-150 SLOC per hour

4 Rework

- ☞ All errors/problems addressed by author
- ☞ Rate: 16-20 hours per 1000 SLOC

5 Follow-up

- ☞ Moderator ensures all errors have been corrected
- ☞ if more than 5% reworked, product is re-inspected by original inspection team



Tactics for problematic review meetings

→ Devil's advocate

- ☞ deliberate attempt to adopt a contrary position

→ Bebugging

- ☞ put some deliberate errors in before the review
 - > with prizes for finding them!

→ Money bowl

- ☞ if a reviewer speaks out of turn, he/she puts 25c into the drinks kitty

→ Alarm

- ☞ use a timer to limit 'speechifying'

→ Issues blackboard

- ☞ appoint someone to keep an issues list, to be written up after the review

→ Stand-up review

- ☞ no tables or chairs!



References

van Vliet, H. "Software Engineering: Principles and Practice (2nd Edition)" Wiley, 1999.

Section 13.4 gives a very brief overview of inspections and walkthroughs.

Freedman, D. P. and Weinberg, G. M. "Handbook of Walkthroughs, Inspections and Technical Reviews". Dorset House, 1990.

Good practical guidebook, full of sensible advice about conducting reviews. Not so strong on the data collection and process improvement aspects of Fagan inspections, though.

Ackerman, A. F. "Software Inspections and the Cost Effective Production of Reliable Software". From "Software Engineering", Dorfman & Thayer, eds., IEEE Computer Society Press, 1997.

This paper summarizes some of the practical aspects of introducing inspections, including how inspectors are trained.

Karl E. Wieggers, "Peer Reviews in Software: A Practical Guide", Addison-Wesley, 2001

Not actually published yet, but some chapters are on the web. We'll be using the forms from this book for our practical inspection exercise in the tutorials.

Blum, B. "Software Engineering: A Holistic View". Oxford University Press, 1992

Section 5.2 provides one of the best overview of walkthroughs and inspections anywhere. Blum manages to cut through a lot of the confusion about 'walkthroughs', 'inspections' and 'reviews' managing to get to the key issues.