Chapter X

eXtreme Programming

One of the emerging techniques that is becoming increasingly popular for managing software project is eXtreme Programming (XP) (Beck, 1999, 2000; Williams, 2000). XP surely changes the way in which we develop and manage software, as all the other methodologies related to the Agile Manifesto do (Agile Alliance, 2001; Boehm, 2002; Cockburn, 2001; Highsmith, 2001; Rakitin, 2001). XP has been the methodology that I have adopted in recent years to develop and manage software projects — before modifying it in order to create my own methodology, ADPD (Agile and Defined Project Development), which is described in Chapter XI.

In order to understand ADPD, it is necessary to acquire all the possible knowledge about XP, since ADPD is XP 80% and recognizes quite all the values of this revolutionary technique for developing and managing software projects.

The most interesting feature of XP consists in the fact that it is human oriented (Brooks, 1995). XP considers the human factor as the main component for steering a project toward a success story. On the other hand, it is important to notice that XP is guided by programming rules, even if its more interesting aspects deal with the values that are the real guides for the design, development, and management processes.

XP Values

The same values that are the basis of XP also have been discussed in the first part of the book, where the skills for management have been presented, and therefore, these values can be considered as a guide for a manager, independent of the methodology adopted in the software life cycle.

A very short general comment about each value is written, and, as a reminder for the reader, each value has been bound to the management chapters of this book that are related to it. The values on which XP is based are communication (already discussed in Chapters I, III, IV, and V), simplicity (discussed in Chapters II, IV, and VI), feedback (discussed in Chapters I, IV, V, and VI), and courage (discussed in Chapters II and VI).

Communication

Communication is the first value, since XP's main objective is to keep the communication channel always open and to maintain a correct information flow. All the programming rules I will describe later cannot work without communication among all the people involved in the project: customer, management, and developers. Communication is important not only for managing the project but also for managing people and reducing skill shortage, improving the global quality of the team. One of the roles of management is to keep communication always open (Blair, 1995); no management can exist without communication, which is true not only for software projects but for all the projects that must be completed successfully within a specified time frame having the expected results.

It has to be pointed out that there are several ways to communicate: oral communication (the main communication channel in XP), written formal documentation (not really exploited in XP) that allows one to create the project documentation before and during the project, and written informal documentation that is all the sticks attached on the wall or on the Gantt diagram of the project to evidence whose changes have been performed (this informal written communication is widely adopted in XP).

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