

File 20100414.0721: Notes from meeting with Dr Martin:

I reported the current status of Radiant Mercury 5.0 certification testing. IV&V in Charleston is wrapping up and will be finished with their testing on Friday of this week or Tuesday of next week. They will then write their report, due 30th April. Penetration testing is still ongoing. They won't stop until ordered to stop and write a report. Unlike the IV&V group who have a finite number of test procedures to go through, pen testing is completely open-ended doesn't stop until they run out of money. It is very similar to covert channel analysis (CCA) in that way.

The IV&V report will come to the developer and the certifier at the same time. The developer will spend a couple of days reading and understanding the report, then probably have to develop a patch for any Cat I or Cat II findings. Issuance of the patch will be followed by commencement of the final stage of testing: Beta 2 testing in an operational environment.

The plan calls for Beta 2 to be done at Joint Forces Command, but I am aware that JFCOM has a time constraint. Testing at JFCOM must be complete by 1st June because they need to support an exercise. Between 30th April and 1st June there is not enough time for the developer to receive the IV&V report, develop a patch, get it into testing at JFCOM, and finish by 1st June. So the developer and the programme office have formulated two alternate plans: either wait until August when JFCOM will become available again, or move the Beta 2 testing to STRATCOM.

Neither of these alternate plans is very desirable, but I predict they will choose not to wait. Waiting until August would delay certification a lot, and that would impact the plans of multiple customers who are depending on getting certified RM systems this summer. I predict that the programme office will do two things. First, they will try to cram Beta 2 into JFCOM before the deadline. They will waste some time trying to do so, before the certifier tells them to back off. Then they will move Beta 2 testing to STRATCOM to avoid delaying the certification.

It is expected that no major findings will result from Beta 2. There is the possibility of a patch, which would necessitate re-running regression and IV&V tests, but that is unlikely. After Beta 2 finishes, and the operational site submits their report to the certifier, then it is only a short time before a certification letter is issued. UCDMO will issue an updated list of approved guards, and installations at operational sites will be able to proceed as scheduled.

Documentation of the above series of events is interesting for my thesis because it illustrates how the certification process actually works in practice.

Next, I reported on progress achieved during the past two weeks. I have been taking a lot of on-line surveys, examining how the questions are worded and arranged in an attempt to learn the tricks. The survey software provider has a tutorial available, which I went through, and there are several web-based courses from other providers. I want to get the survey questions out to my test participants in the next 6 days.

Regarding the Venn diagram, anticipating something I expect to happen in future, I have been formulating an answer to the question I expect to be asked some day: 'tell me what it means'. I will have an answer ready for when I do get asked that question.

Other than the above, I have been doing a lot of reading this week. The talk I gave at Lockheed was well-received, resulting in an email inbox full of requests for more information and requests for more talks. I have three more talks scheduled, on 20th April, 23rd or 30th April, and 5th May 2010. It is good experience in both speaking and writing.

I reported some frustration with the Lockheed process of review for public release. In the past it was relatively quick, but lately the queue has bogged down and I have several requests in the pipeline that haven't come out yet. I am not sure whether the person who does it has changed jobs or what, but I need to visit the Deer Creek facility later to find out. It is not impacting the schedule yet but the lead time is a possible risk for upcoming deliverables.

Looking at the schedule, Dr Martin observed that the journal paper has been 'two weeks out' for a long time now. Looking at the schedule, we re-prioritised events as follows:

First, get the surveys out. They represent data, which I need for interpreting preliminary results in the journal article. Additionally, the survey design is part of the methodology, needed also for the Crosstalk article submission and methodology chapter.

Next, complete part of the methodology chapter followed by getting the journal article out the door. I need to look at the list of priority tasks in Gantt chart form, because there are interrelationships between tasks that do not show up in list form. Dr Martin cautioned not to spend much time over-thinking the schedule, though. Results are needed more.

I crave the feeling of sending a paper out that I wrote. That positive reinforcement is what keeps me going forward. My proclivity is to delay by over-thinking, over-planning, or by finding another stack of papers to read instead of writing. I have to watch out for that.

Dr Martin said I appear to be on a roll, slightly in danger of falling off but not fallen off yet. Get some concrete results from those surveys and I you'll be in better shape.

I am going to go work on my surveys now. Dr Martin said that getting a stack of survey results back will be good positive reinforcement.

Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, 21st April at 1400 Oxford time.

Call ended 0720.

References