

Chapter 4

■ Principles that Guide Practice

Slide Set to accompany

Software Engineering: A Practitioner's Approach, 7/e

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Software Engineering Knowledge

- *You often hear people say that software development knowledge has a 3-year half-life: half of what you need to know today will be obsolete within 3 years. In the domain of technology-related knowledge, that's probably about right. But there is another kind of software development knowledge—a kind that I think of as "**software engineering principles**"—that does not have a three-year half-life. These software engineering principles are likely to serve a professional programmer throughout his or her career.*

Steve McConnell

Principles that Guide Process - I

- **Principle #1. *Be agile.*** Whether the process model you choose is prescriptive or agile, the basic tenets of agile development should govern your approach.
- **Principle #2. *Focus on quality at every step.*** The exit condition for every process activity, action, and task should focus on the quality of the work product that has been produced.
- **Principle #3. *Be ready to adapt.*** Process is not a religious experience and dogma has no place in it. When necessary, adapt your approach to constraints imposed by the problem, the people, and the project itself.
- **Principle #4. *Build an effective team.*** Software engineering process and practice are important, but the bottom line is people. Build a self-organizing team that has mutual trust and respect.

Principles that Guide Process - II

- **Principle #5. *Establish mechanisms for communication and coordination.*** Projects fail because important information falls into the cracks and/or stakeholders fail to coordinate their efforts to create a successful end product.
- **Principle #6. *Manage change.*** The approach may be either formal or informal, but mechanisms must be established to manage the way changes are requested, assessed, approved and implemented.
- **Principle #7. *Assess risk.*** Lots of things can go wrong as software is being developed. It's essential that you establish contingency plans.
- **Principle #8. *Create work products that provide value for others.*** Create only those work products that provide value for other process activities, actions or tasks.

Principles that Guide Practice

- **Principle #1. *Divide and conquer.*** Stated in a more technical manner, analysis and design should always emphasize *separation of concerns* (SoC).
- **Principle #2. *Understand the use of abstraction.*** At its core, an abstraction is a simplification of some complex element of a system used to communicate meaning in a single phrase.
- **Principle #3. *Strive for consistency.*** A familiar context makes software easier to use.
- **Principle #4. *Focus on the transfer of information.*** Pay special attention to the analysis, design, construction, and testing of interfaces.

Principles that Guide Practice

- **Principle #5. *Build software that exhibits effective modularity.*** Separation of concerns (Principle #1) establishes a philosophy for software. *Modularity* provides a mechanism for realizing the philosophy.
- **Principle #6. *Look for patterns.*** Brad Appleton [App00] suggests that: “The goal of patterns within the software community is to create a body of literature to help software developers resolve recurring problems encountered throughout all of software development.
- **Principle #7. *When possible, represent the problem and its solution from a number of different perspectives.***
- **Principle #8. *Remember that someone will maintain the software.***

Communication Principles

- **Principle #1. *Listen.*** Try to focus on the speaker's words, rather than formulating your response to those words.
- **Principle # 2. *Prepare before you communicate.*** Spend the time to understand the problem before you meet with others.
- **Principle # 3. *Someone should facilitate the activity.*** Every communication meeting should have a leader (a facilitator) to keep the conversation moving in a productive direction; (2) to mediate any conflict that does occur, and (3) to ensure that other principles are followed.
- **Principle #4. *Face-to-face communication is best.*** But it usually works better when some other representation of the relevant information is present.

Communication Principles

- **Principle # 5. *Take notes and document decisions.*** Someone participating in the communication should serve as a “recorder” and write down all important points and decisions.
- **Principle # 6. *Strive for collaboration.*** Collaboration and consensus occur when the collective knowledge of members of the team is combined ...
- **Principle # 7. *Stay focused, modularize your discussion.*** The more people involved in any communication, the more likely that discussion will bounce from one topic to the next.
- **Principle # 8. *If something is unclear, draw a picture.***
- **Principle # 9. *(a) Once you agree to something, move on; (b) If you can't agree to something, move on; (c) If a feature or function is unclear and cannot be clarified at the moment, move on.***
- **Principle # 10. *Negotiation is not a contest or a game. It works best when both parties win.***

Planning Principles

- **Principle #1. *Understand the scope of the project.*** It's impossible to use a roadmap if you don't know where you're going. Scope provides the software team with a destination.
- **Principle #2. *Involve the customer in the planning activity.*** The customer defines priorities and establishes project constraints.
- **Principle #3. *Recognize that planning is iterative.*** A project plan is never engraved in stone. As work begins, it very likely that things will change.
- **Principle #4. *Estimate based on what you know.*** The intent of estimation is to provide an indication of effort, cost, and task duration, based on the team's current understanding of the work to be done.

Planning Principles

- **Principle #5. *Consider risk as you define the plan.*** If you have identified risks that have high impact and high probability, contingency planning is necessary.
- **Principle #6. *Be realistic.*** People don't work 100 percent of every day.
- **Principle #7. *Adjust granularity as you define the plan.*** *Granularity* refers to the level of detail that is introduced as a project plan is developed.
- **Principle #8. *Define how you intend to ensure quality.*** The plan should identify how the software team intends to ensure quality.
- **Principle #9. *Describe how you intend to accommodate change.*** Even the best planning can be obviated by uncontrolled change.
- **Principle #10. *Track the plan frequently and make adjustments as required.*** Software projects fall behind schedule one day at a time.

Modeling Principles

- In software engineering work, two classes of models can be created:
 - *Requirements models (also called analysis models)* represent the customer requirements by depicting the software in three different domains: the information domain, the functional domain, and the behavioral domain.
 - *Design models* represent characteristics of the software that help practitioners to construct it effectively: the architecture, the user interface, and component-level detail.

Requirements Modeling Principles

- **Principle #1.** *The information domain of a problem must be represented and understood.*
- **Principle #2.** *The functions that the software performs must be defined.*
- **Principle #3.** *The behavior of the software (as a consequence of external events) must be represented.*
- **Principle #4.** *The models that depict information, function, and behavior must be partitioned in a manner that uncovers detail in a layered (or hierarchical) fashion.*
- **Principle #5.** *The analysis task should move from essential information toward implementation detail.*

Design Modeling Principles

- **Principle #1.** *Design should be traceable to the requirements model.*
- **Principle #2.** *Always consider the architecture of the system to be built.*
- **Principle #3.** *Design of data is as important as design of processing functions.*
- **Principle #5.** User interface design should be tuned to the needs of the end-user. However, in every case, it should stress ease of use.
- **Principle #6.** Component-level design should be functionally independent.
- **Principle #7.** Components should be loosely coupled to one another and to the external environment.
- **Principle #8.** Design representations (models) should be easily understandable.
- **Principle #9.** The design should be developed iteratively. With each iteration, the designer should strive for greater simplicity.

Agile Modeling Principles

- *Principle #1. The primary goal of the software team is to build software, not create models.*
- *Principle #2. Travel light—don't create more models than you need.*
- *Principle #3. Strive to produce the simplest model that will describe the problem or the software.*
- *Principle #4. Build models in a way that makes them amenable to change.*
- *Principle #5. Be able to state an explicit purpose for each model that is created.*
- *Principle #6. Adapt the models you develop to the system at hand.*
- *Principle #7. Try to build useful models, but forget about building perfect models.*
- *Principle #8. Don't become dogmatic about the syntax of the model. If it communicates content successfully, representation is secondary.*
- *Principle #9. If your instincts tell you a model isn't right even though it seems okay on paper, you probably have reason to be concerned.*
- *Principle #10. Get feedback as soon as you can.*

Construction Principles

- The construction activity encompasses a set of coding and testing tasks that lead to operational software that is ready for delivery to the customer or end-user.
- **Coding principles and concepts** are closely aligned programming style, programming languages, and programming methods.
- **Testing principles and concepts** lead to the design of tests that systematically uncover different classes of errors and to do so with a minimum amount of time and effort.

Preparation Principles

- *Before you write one line of code, be sure you:*
 - Understand of the problem you're trying to solve.
 - Understand basic design principles and concepts.
 - Pick a programming language that meets the needs of the software to be built and the environment in which it will operate.
 - Select a programming environment that provides tools that will make your work easier.
 - Create a set of unit tests that will be applied once the component you code is completed.

Coding Principles

- *As you begin writing code, be sure you:*
 - Constrain your algorithms by following structured programming [Boh00] practice.
 - Consider the use of pair programming
 - Select data structures that will meet the needs of the design.
 - Understand the software architecture and create interfaces that are consistent with it.
 - Keep conditional logic as simple as possible.
 - Create nested loops in a way that makes them easily testable.
 - Select meaningful variable names and follow other local coding standards.
 - Write code that is self-documenting.
 - Create a visual layout (e.g., indentation and blank lines) that aids understanding.

Validation Principles

- *After you've completed your first coding pass, be sure you:*
 - Conduct a code walkthrough when appropriate.
 - Perform unit tests and correct errors you've uncovered.
 - Refactor the code.

Testing Principles

- Al Davis [Dav95] suggests the following:
 - **Principle #1.** *All tests should be traceable to customer requirements.*
 - **Principle #2.** *Tests should be planned long before testing begins.*
 - **Principle #3.** *The Pareto principle applies to software testing.*
 - **Principle #4.** *Testing should begin “in the small” and progress toward testing “in the large.”*
 - **Principle #5.** *Exhaustive testing is not possible.*

Deployment Principles

- **Principle #1.** *Customer expectations for the software must be managed.* Too often, the customer expects more than the team has promised to deliver, and disappointment occurs immediately.
- **Principle #2.** *A complete delivery package should be assembled and tested.*
- **Principle #3.** *A support regime must be established before the software is delivered.* An end-user expects responsiveness and accurate information when a question or problem arises.
- **Principle #4.** *Appropriate instructional materials must be provided to end-users.*
- **Principle #5.** *Buggy software should be fixed first, delivered later.*