

## Doing CMMI Appraisals Right (at RMS)

- 1) An appraisal learned organization. An organization that has studied and dialoged on the appraisal Method Description Document (MDD) with themselves and their lead appraiser. This requires an honest and collegial relationship with the lead appraiser that emphasizes 2-way communication and sees both parties as technical equals. This relationship allows for spirited discussions bringing participants to a richer understanding of the appraisal method in the context of RMS. Challenges are issued and welcomed by both parties. RMS has invested in its core knowledge by sending a cohort to industry conferences, CMMI Institute classes, and other Raytheon organizations' appraisals as team members. This cohort accumulated a powerful understanding of the CMMI and appraisal method, but is now retired, retiring or being moved to other assignments.
- 2) A confident organization. Efficiency and innovation trump tradition, even in the face of what "others may think." RMS REALLY understands its business objectives (production, mission assurance) and is willing to challenge a "development focused" CMMI industry. RMS rejects any recommendations (from lead or team) that cannot justify why and how it will help the business. RMS management is willing to listen to their own experts as opposed to retreating to how things have always been done. RMS is on the offensive with new perspectives: 1) Dialoging directly with the Institute on grey areas and new interpretations, 2) Boldly presenting the RMS approach at conferences, 3) Welcoming a CMMI Institute audit as this would help the Institute understand the RMS approach. Put simply, RMS is Not afraid to rock (educate) the whole appraisal thought process.
- 3) Appraisal Team. Appraisal team members are treated as technical equals and called to task whenever their expectations go beyond method and model definitions. What they "expect" or "like" or "are used to seeing" is typically challenged at RMS because RMS puts business needs ahead of appraisal needs when defining and executing its process. Team members are expected to work hard and are not "coached" by RMS, but challenged. The team reviews and modifies its agreements on model and method interpretations at every meeting. RMS invests time in its appraisal teams and welcomes new team members at each appraisal cycle.
- 4) In the business of saving money. RMS actually wants to lower appraisal costs and does not appear to practice the "use it or lose it" approach to appraisal spending. Visitors are asked to be "mindful" of spending.
- 5) No-greed Lead. The lead appraiser's priority is to serve the client efficiently and effectively. There are no "attachments" to the engagement contract. An "attachment" could be a mandate to buy 10 days of consulting in addition to appraisal services. The lead appraiser stays within government per-diem expense limits, and actually recommends removing himself from low priority activities. Appraisal planning duties are able to be shared with the lead due to experienced and savvy RMS CMMI principals.
- 6) Shoulder to shoulder technique. A powerful and efficient method for initial data identification for process areas of the CMMI. A 2-person mini team (from the appraisal team) meets with select project personnel to read through the practices of a process area, come to a common understanding of what they mean in the context of the project, and then identify data that demonstrates each CMMI practice is performed. Some data is actually collected during the meeting and mini team and project personnel take actions to procure the remaining data post meeting.
- 7) Planning Ahead. RMS built Level 5 into its common process in 2003. Since the machinery for level 5 was built in from the beginning, RMS did not waste time on the typical steps of: get level 3, define level 5 solution, pilot level 5 solution, discover level 3 solution must be re-written, discover level 5 solution must be re-written, pilot level 3 and 5 solutions, be level 5. In fact, when RMS had its first CMMI Level 3 appraisal the team was assigned to evaluate the Level 5 definition to determine if it covered all the level 5 requirements of the CMMI. RMS moved from Level 3 to Level 5 quickly as it did not have to roll out any new processes.