



Promoting IT Efficiency

QAIassist Blog Article

IT Methodology Terminology - Survey

“IT Methodology” – what’s in a name?

From its inception Information Technology (IT) has recognized the significance and importance of developing and applying a set of “standards”, “methodologies”, “lifecycles” and “best practices” that can be leveraged by its practitioners – the underlying objective has always been to increase the efficiencies of IT resources in the field. As the industry has evolved, the technologies have become more complex, increasingly faster, and forever changing, however, despite all of these advancements the IT industry remains in a self induced dilemma surrounding some of its most basic terminology.

To prove this point all we have to do is identify an unbiased audience of IT practitioners, establish a reliable sample population of that audience, ask the same specific question to each individual of the sample population, and document the responses provided by each individual of the sample population. With this approach in mind I recently attended a conference of several hundred IT professionals and practitioners. Attendees at the conference included senior management, business stakeholders, project managers, business analysts, architects, programmers and testers. My goal was to obtain a true and reliable perspective of what IT professionals understood the term “IT Methodology” to mean.

Applying these parameters I began on my quest. I set a target of speaking to 40 independent IT practitioners with a minimum of 3 years of IT experience – the population of 40 IT practitioners consisted of senior managers, business stakeholders, project managers, business analysts, programmers, testers. The following question was posed to each and every one of them. The question - *Is “IT Methodology” a noun or a verb?*

Without exception, all of the individuals asked the question were aware of the term “IT Methodology”.

- 50% of those who responded said an “IT Methodology” was a noun – they cited PMI Project Management, IBM’s Rational Unified Method (RUP), Prince2, QAassist Integrated Methodology as some other methodologies they had used
- 30% of those who responded said that an “IT Methodology” was a verb – they cited their experiences with delivery approaches such as waterfall, agile, RAD, prototyping and spiral
- 10% of those who responded said that an “IT Methodology” was both a noun and a verb – they cited both of the above mentioned responses
- 10% of those responded would not commit to stating whether “IT Methodology” was either a noun or a verb – they were not sure either way

Suffice it to say, these collective responses were not what I had anticipated, they left me somewhat puzzled and concerned from a number of perspectives.

After giving these “unofficial survey” results a couple of weeks to resonate (and getting away from the emotion), I have taken it upon myself to try and articulate why the results of my “unofficial survey” were so disturbing to me. I have created the following examples to provide a context for the discussion.

Example I – Flying a Commercial Jet

Two pilots are scheduled to fly a commercial jet full of passengers from New York to London. The pilot is experienced and well trained; the co-pilot is new to the profession and learning on the job. During take-off the pilot guides the plane down the runway and safely elevates it into the sky. During the flight the pilot decides to catch 40 winks and hands control over to the co-pilot – he then drifts off into gentle slumber. Forty minutes later the pilot is awoken by the jolt of his seatbelt harness locking him into his seat – it doesn’t take him long to realize the co-pilot has lost control of the plane. Instinctively the pilot grabs the stick to resume control and take the plane out of its spin – he starts issuing directions to the co-pilot who is seeking to right the ship. The pilot says “full left rudder” and the co-pilot puts down the landing gear – the pilot says “drop the passenger oxygen masks” and the co-pilot jettisons the fuel tanks – the pilot says “pull your nose up” and the co-pilot glances toward the ceiling.

Example II – Performing Heart Surgery

A patient is brought into the hospital Emergency Room – problem – patient is suffering from chest pain and possible heart attack. A seasoned doctor and an intern are working the shift together and are immediately called to address the emergency. As the patient is put on the gurney the veteran doctor asks the intern what the patient vital signs are – the intern responds with a blank stare saying “vital signs -what are they?”. The seasoned doctor then asks for the heart rate of the patient and the intern says “does that mean how many beats per minute?” The veteran doctor then requests the “paddles” and the intern responds with “I left them at the cottage”

The point I am trying to make is not about flying a commercial plane or performing open heart surgery. It’s about why there is such a disparity in how and why IT professionals are not compelled or responsible for establishing and applying a common terminology that could be

understood and expected to be applied by everyone in the field. Although un-verifiable (even with my “unofficial survey”) I suspect if the IT profession ever took it upon itself to work toward a common terminology it may reduce the number of errors found in applications, it may reduce the time a project team needs to deliver an application to the production environment, it may increase a project teams ability to design an application that meets the user requirements, it may improve the communication and understanding between business subject matter experts and IT practitioners, it may ensure an organizational process could be implemented and relied upon to consistently deliver products, services and operational efficiency.

At the risk of providing the correct answer to the “unofficial survey” question while being perceived as clogging the ever spinning wheels of IT terminology – an “IT Methodology” can be used in the context of both the “noun” and/or the “verb”.

QAassist is the industry recognized benchmark in information technology (IT) methodologies for small and mid-sized business (SMB's) – including the certification and support of practitioners delivering QAassist IT Methodology solutions. Article authored by Cameron Watson – President of QAassist. Visit [QAassist's website—www.qaassist.com](http://www.qaassist.com)