

Introduction: Experience Reports

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I love stories. I love hearing them; I love telling them. Stories connect me to ideas in a way that dry recitals of facts and findings never could. Perhaps it's my love of stories that makes the experience reports track my favorite at conferences. A great experience report is a story: a personal account of what somebody experienced while trying an idea.

Of course, there's more to an experience report than a story. Experience reports are grounded in facts. They're reported by people working on real projects under real constraints. Their stories tell us what they tried, what worked out... and what didn't. If experience is the best teacher, then perhaps these reports are the second-best teacher.

We have an excellent program this year. We received nearly 100 proposals. Whittling the proposals down to the final 30 reports was a grueling process. Our 16-person review committee didn't just read every proposal; we personally conducted a phone interview with the primary author of every proposal. Once the papers were accepted, each paper was shepherded by one of our experienced reviewers.

The experience reports reflect the steady maturation of the agile movement. We received many papers from large companies practicing agile development. Agile development on a large-scale made an appearance and adopting agile, distributed development teams, and co-existing with the CMM remained popular topics.

I was also happy to see many submissions that focused on the whole team. We received several papers on integrating testers into the team and accepted one of them. We also received a paper on integrating technical writers that I'm looking forward to reading, as well as several papers on the role of the customer. I'm particularly looking forward to reading the papers that discuss how agile development allowed their companies to provide unique value to the market.

There are too many great categories for me to mention them all. Agile development is now a well established development process. Areas once considered at the edge of the agile "sweet spot" are now being addressed on a regular basis. This year's experience reports reflect that depth of experience. Take a close look. There's certain to be at least one that applies to you.