Notes from a second meeting of the UK COSMIC SIG Friday 17th October 2014

Capgemini office, Vauxhall, London

Present: Charles Symons, Carol Buttle, Peter Fagg, Mike Eagles (Capgemini), Bernard Londeix, Alison Marsden, Graham Nixon, Chris Woodward, Allen Edwards & Mark Churm (HMRC Telford), Aveek Dasgupta, Andy Jelfs, Patrick Holden (SITA)

Apologies: Paul Hope (Capgemini), Sananathan Rajagopal (MoD Abbey Wood), Sue Rule, Phil Standing

1. Report on the COSMIC Annual meeting at the IWSM, 6th October (CW)

This open meeting was attended by members of the COSMIC International Advisory Council from 15 countries, with 30+ people in total. See slides used at the open meeting which accompany these notes. Main points:

- A new initiative will be made to get more COSMIC-measured project data into the ISBSG database (currently almost 500 such projects)

- Marketing COSMIC is our greatest concern (see slides 31-36). This should be at three levels:

  o The CEO: usually does not care about which metrics or even if any metrics. We need to sell to them the equivalent of 'sunshine and health', not 'cornflakes', i.e. 'delivering projects that meet needs, on time and budget', not 'software metrics'. It's inherently difficult to get our arguments to them due to the lack of contact channels. In the UK, CS is trying various routes to this level, especially in the public sector (see 9 below).

  o 'Related professionals', this includes the BCS, the PMI, and associations of cost estimators, who need a similar but more direct message as for CEO's. GN reported that he had presented to a software engineering conference for the aerospace industry. Less than ¼ of the participants came from organizations having a software metrics programme. One important audience is requirements engineering specialists. ME spoke of the benefit of measurement to help clarify and to find gaps in requirements.

  o Metrics specialists. This is where most of our marketing effort has been but these people are not easily persuaded to change their habits and many organizations do not have proper metrics programmes.

- On IFPUG vs COSMIC, see slide 15, 16. Both parties have agreed to try to co-operate more. We have sent IFPUG the Glossary of NFR terms from our new 'Guideline on accounting for NFR' to see if they would be OK to issue a joint publication. COSMIC does not believe that SNAP is the right way to deal with NFR, and that long-term it will not succeed. We await IFPUG's response on the Glossary. (Interesting that the IFPUG Board now has more non-US than US members. We were told to expect a cultural shift.)

- Many people have taken the Foundation level certification exam. We now need an Advanced level exam (see slides 18 – 29). **Any volunteers to help with this? If interested, please contact CS.**

- We plan to re-build the 'cosmicon' website (now 14 years old) using the same technology as used for the re-vamped NESMA site.

2. Importance of Benchmarking (CB)

CB described the concerns of the safety and security systems community with the performance of the system suppliers, particularly the high level of project failures and inability to deliver to time and budget. A survey of supplier practices in collecting performance data and using them for estimating showed wide variations from poor to excellent. These concerns are shared by various regulatory bodies such as those for the nuclear, transport and banking industries.

A system for certifying vendor competence in estimating is being developed. An assessment will require evidence of competence on topics such as use of repeatable, multiple estimating methods, recording and accessibility of project data, multiple gate reviews of estimates, on-going training, etc.

Excellent companies are being asked to share their project performance data to help create reliable benchmarks. CS noted a similar attitude in the automotive industry where many manufacturers are developing a common architecture known as AUTOSAR under the motto 'cooperate on standards, compete on implementation'.

3. Report on the main papers presented at the IWSM in Rotterdam (CS)

See slides 4 – 30 of the set used by CS at the meeting, distributed with these notes. Slide 4 gives the url's to obtain the papers. These slides give a summary of the papers that I found most interesting and hopefully relevant to this SIG.

4. Report from Measurement Practices Committee

See slide 32. In addition, PF reported that a data model of the COSMIC concepts (i.e. a meta-model) is nearly ready to submit to the MPC. The model is useful to give an overview of all concepts and how they relate as a summary in a training course, and should be useful for suppliers of tools to record or automate COSMIC measurements.

5. The role of COSMIC sizing in projects from requirements to implementation – exchange of experience (BL)

BL introduced a model (slide 35) to illustrate how COSMIC sizing may be used in the various project stages. AE notes that HMRC has used a process like this to drive performance improvement from suppliers. GN commented that it's difficult for public sector customers to move away from 5+ year contracts. Contracting on a price/unit size basis provides an alternative. CS hopes to align COSMIC with the Scope Manager role as defined in 'Northern Scope' process in Finland

6. Use of COSMIC in Agile projects – update from research in Canada, experience in Aon Australia (CS)

See slides 23 – 24 for some recent Canadian experience. See the Lnkedin COSMIC User Group recent discussion of how Aon Australia use COSMIC to estimate and control Agile projects. We hope Sylvie Trudel will have time to update the Agile Guideline with practical experience early next year.

7. V4.0 Certification exam in UK?

CS asked for volunteers to take the new on-line Foundation-level certification exam which has been upgraded to v4.0. **Action: All**

8. Update from UKSMA (ME)

ME reported that UKSMA had now held a one-day specialist workshop rather than a conference which have not been well attended in recent years. UKSMA has also been updating the Defect Standard which it hopes to issue before year-end.

CS urged UKSMA to consider applying to become a BCS SIG. This would give metrics a large-scale platform on which to promote its activities. CS hopes to have contact with the BCS in connection with the 'NIITE proposal' (see next item) and offered to try to explore this option.

9. Progress on the NIITE proposal (CS)

CS had formed a group to examine ideas on how to advise the Government on improving its performance in managing its ICT suppliers and getting better delivery to time and budget. Discussions have led to the proposal to establish a National Institute for ICT Excellence (by analogy with the NICE). The idea has been well received but the proposal document needs to be re-written based on more fundamental criticisms than just those of the current government ICT strategy, which is a moving feast. The group has therefore developed its view of a set of Critical Success Factors for public sector – see slide 40 of the attachment.

The discussion of these CSF's led to the following comments

- The Treasury wants to see better cost control, i.e. not having costs spiralling away
- The way in which civil servants careers are developed needs mentioning (when people are appointed to a new position, whether their grade fits matters more than their skills)
- PF claimed that more is going on under the heading 'Research' than might be apparent.

10. Next meeting

We agreed to hold another meeting in six months. CS suggests **Friday 17th April**.

HMRC (AE) offered to present on how they use size measurements to estimate and control supplier performance.

Charles Symons

20th October 2014