

Title of Paper

End-User Computing: Risks in Spreadsheets

Presenter

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Level

Introductory Intermediate Advanced

Target Group

The most interested group would be QA or Test Managers who need to give an opinion on the exposure of a company to risk from uncontrolled spreadsheets. Typically these managers would be in regulated industries such as financial services or pharmaceutical production.

Abstract

"The ranks of sorcerer's apprentice user-programmers will swell rapidly, giving many who have little training or expertise in how to avoid or detect high-risk defects tremendous power to create high-risk defects" [Barry Boehm]

The risks in business dependence on spreadsheets developed by overconfident "near experts" are confirmed by research and news stories on spreadsheet errors. This paper presents dynamic and static methods of testing spreadsheets, and describes good design practice to build in protection, validation, and usability. Context-driven risk assessment helps prioritise the resources to maximise the returns from the effort expended. Also described are auditing tools to assess the quality of existing spreadsheet assets.

Biography

Patrick is Managing Director of Systems Modelling Limited since 1981. His current focus is spreadsheet systems modelling and auditing services as well as IT consultancy. He was chair 2004-7 of the European Spreadsheet Risks Interest Group (EuSpRIG) and of SoftTest Ireland, and a Fellow of the Irish Computer Society. He advised the ECDL Foundation on the content of a syllabus for a new certification in good spreadsheet practices. His latest book is "Spreadsheet Check and Control" (Systems Publishing, 2005, ISBN 190540400X)

He was an Expert Advisor to the European Commission during the first euro currency conversion of 12 member states. He provided presentations and tutorials internationally, changeover consulting and compliance auditing. He is an approved software tester to the BASDA standard for EMU compliance, and contributed advice and converter testing services to the Euro Business Awareness Campaign of Ireland. His book "Managing the Euro in Information Systems; Strategies for Successful Changeover" was published by Addison Wesley in 1999, ISBN 0201604825.

His long career spans many facets of software systems development, testing, and training. He is a frequent speaker to international conferences and interest groups on spreadsheet risks and software testing. He is a director of the Informatics Development Institute (IDI) which managed the TRINET FP5 project to provide remote regions with access to the world-wide Internet via low-earth-orbiting satellites. The IDI also participated in the GGPhi FP6 project for the Galileo Joint Undertaking. During the Year 2000 project wave he wrote many articles, spoke internationally, consulted, and audited projects. Prior to that he gained a certification as a TickIT ISO9000 auditor, and he promoted software development process improvement using the Personal Software Process. He lectured on Quantitative Methods and I.T. training in the Irish Management Institute, and in computer applications at the Management Science School of the Department of Statistics in Trinity College Dublin.

Prior to setting up Systems Modelling Ltd he worked as a business analyst in Operations Research for Irish Fertiliser Industries, applying linear programming for production optimisation and project financial modelling,

His interest is in practical, effective solutions to systems problems, with a focus on the real objectives to be attained. Project references are available on request.
