

Secrets of Successful Software Assessments

Presented by
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Who Are We?

- Randall (Randy) Rice – Rice Consulting Service, Inc.
- Thomas C. (Tom) Staab – Wind Ridge International, LLC

Expectations

- No “hard sell”
 - Yes, we both perform a variety of assessments
 - No, we will not be pushing you into services
- We do favor independent assessments
 - We’ ll explain why later
- We welcome your questions, but we’ ll try to keep this session under 45 minutes.

Assessments Can Take Many Forms

- Risk assessments
- Process assessments
- Security assessments
- Test process assessments
- Development and life cycle assessments
- Skill assessments
- Quality improvement assessment

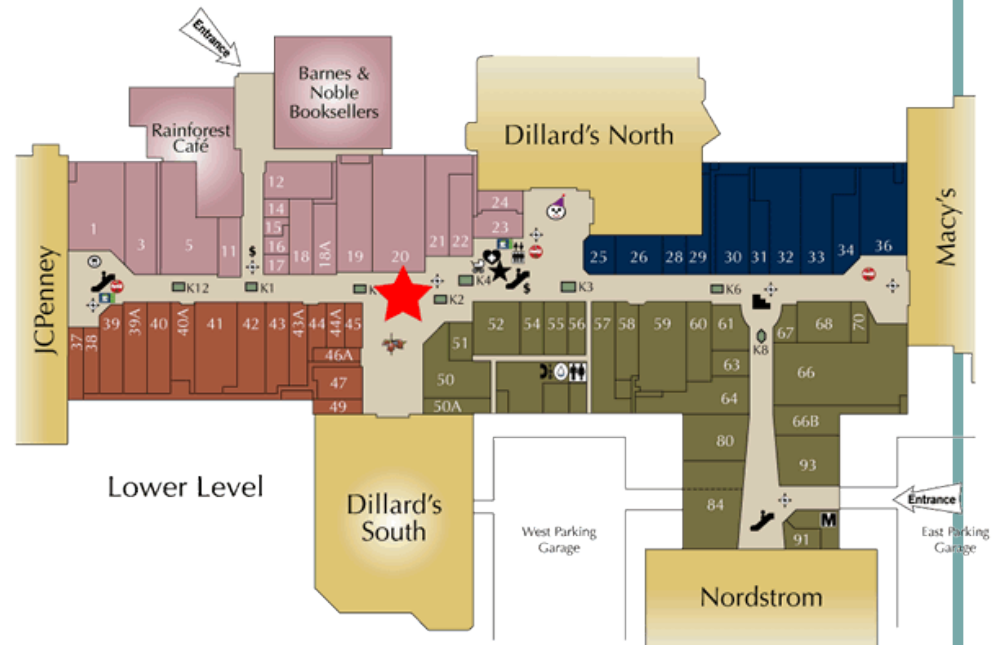
An Initial Question

- If you were planning a trip, what is the most important thing to know after you decide on your destination?



The Answer...

- Your present location or starting point!
- Assessments are not meant to be “good news” or “bad news”, just a reading of where you are right now

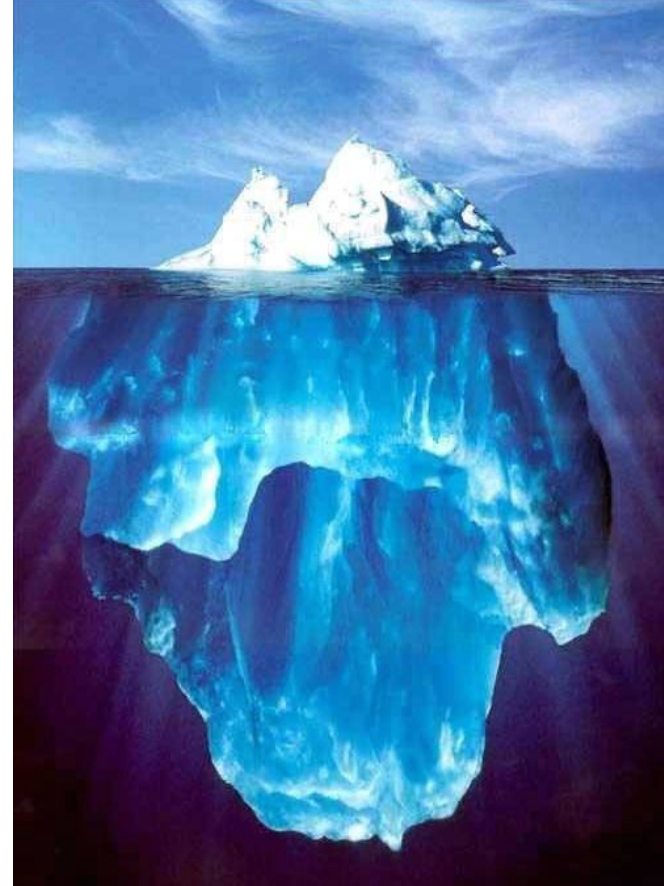


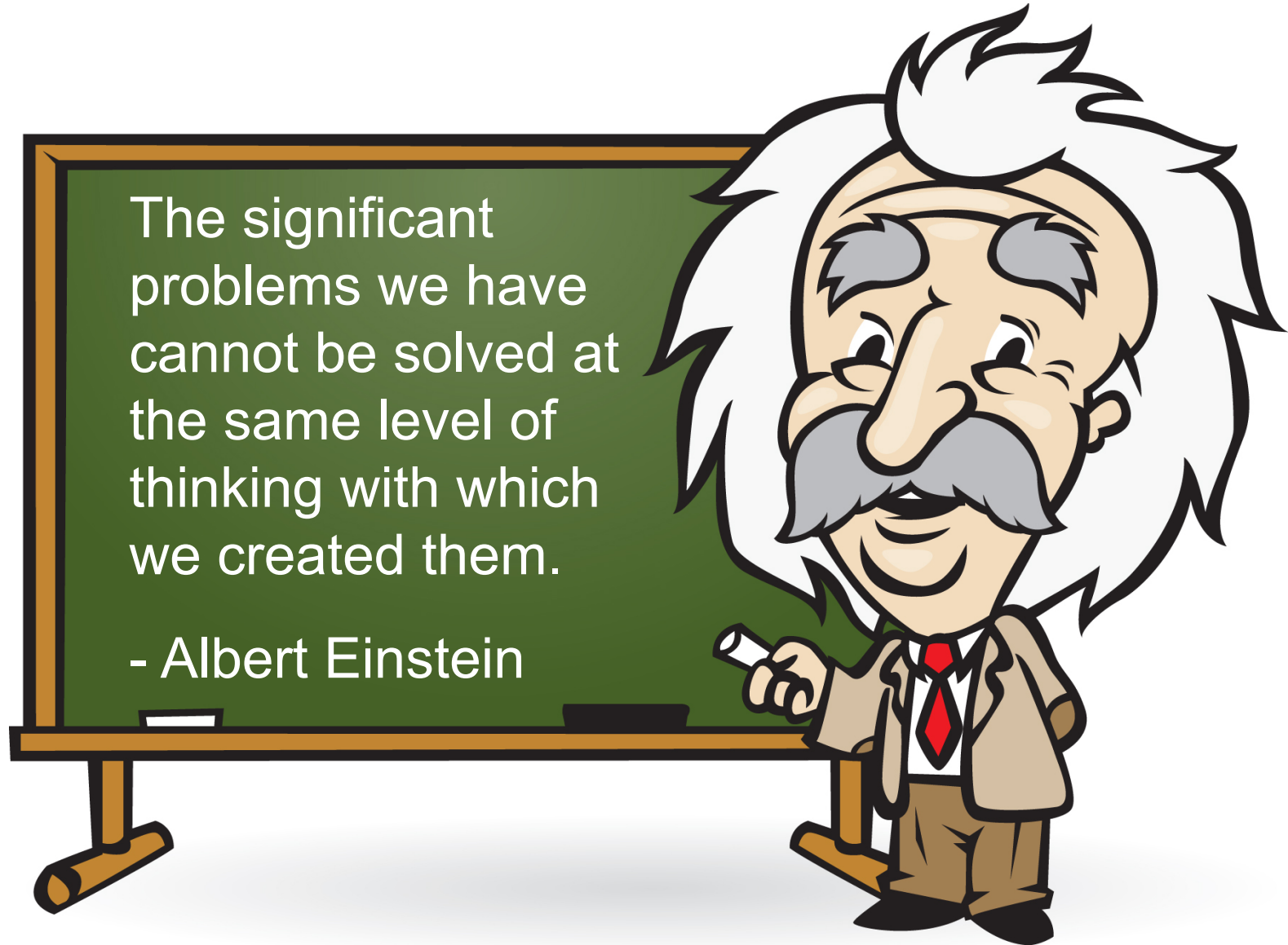
Introduction

- Companies consistently do not deliver projects on-time or on-budget
- Testing process not performing up to expectations
- Many companies waste time and money making changes
- Changes do not truly solve the problem
- What went wrong?

Problems Are Like An Iceberg

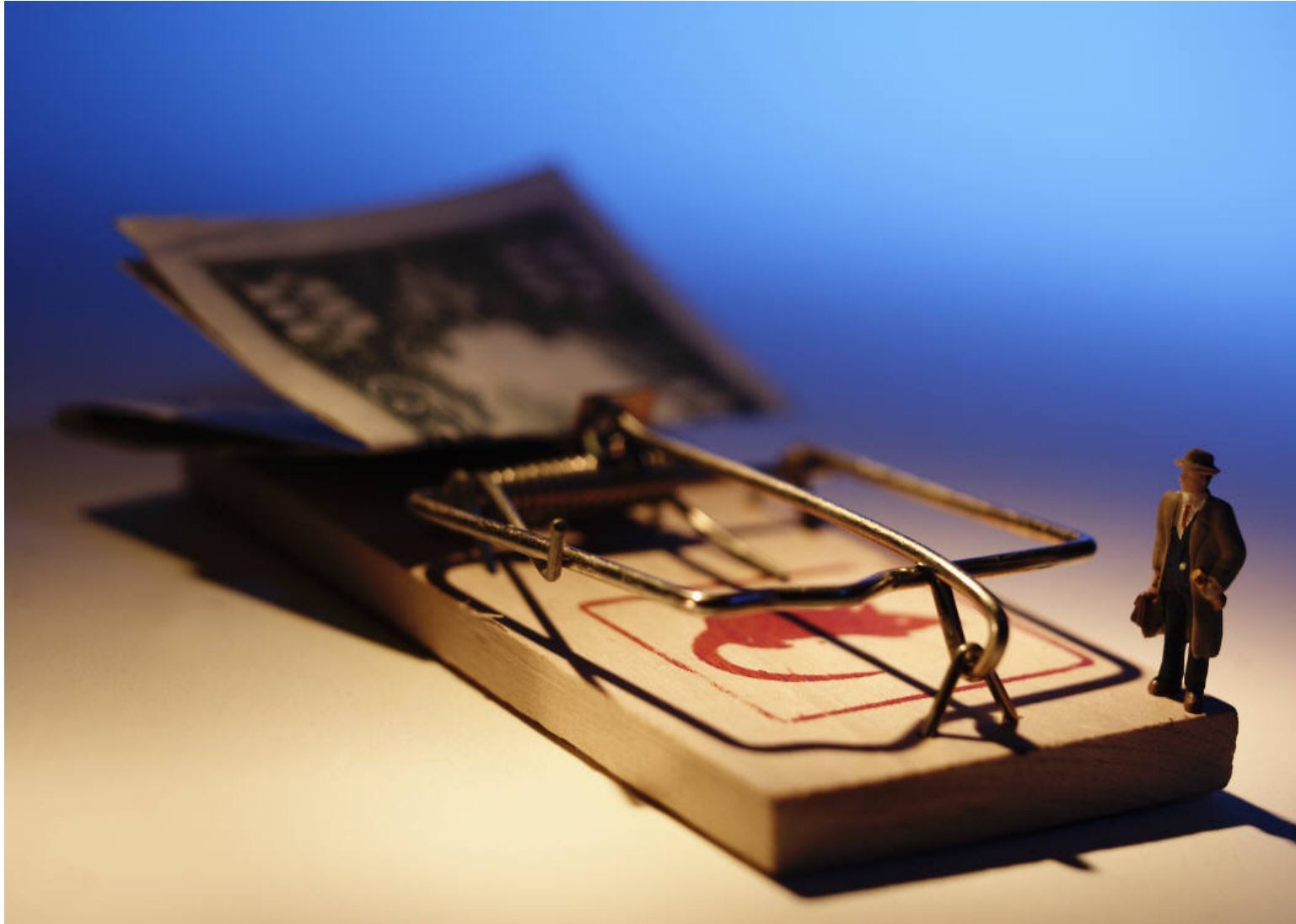
- Only about 40% of the problems are visible
- That means that about 60% require research to identify





Assessment Areas

- Tools
- Processes
- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Measurements
- Historical data



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Trap # 1

- They do not objectively understand their current situation
- What can happen
 - Time and money wasted
 - Nothing gets accomplished and problem still exists
- Solution
 - Perform an unbiased assessment
 - Find out the true current state
 - Findings should be supported by documented facts

Trap # 2

- Do not have upper management support
- What can happen
 - Management won't approve or support process improvements
- Solution
 - Need to get the support before you start
 - Tell them why the assessment needs to be performed
 - What you want to accomplish
 - How will the assessment be performed
 - Cost of assessment and expected ROI

Trap # 3

- Do the assessment using internal resources
- What can happen
 - Arguing over findings
 - Time and money wasted
 - Nothing gets changed
- Solution
 - Prepare a well documented assessment plan
 - Assessment team has to be viewed as unbiased
 - Team should be trained in assessments

Trap # 4

- Pick the wrong assessment team
- What can happen
 - Assessment not viewed as unbiased
 - Findings not well documented
 - Arguments over findings
 - Nothing gets changed
- Solution
 - Team should represent all levels of the organization
 - Use external resources

Trap # 5

- Entered with pre-conceived conclusions
- What can happen
 - Make the findings fit what you think is the problem
 - Not willing to accept the true findings
 - Do not really find out the current state
- Solution
 - Enter the assessment with a “clean slate”
 - Keep an open mind
 - Be committed to fixing the true problems

Trap # 6

- Too narrow a scope
- What can happen
 - Only discover symptoms not problems
 - Do not really find the real problems
 - Problems continue
- Solution
 - Look at the whole organization
 - Nothing is off limits
 - Make everyone available to talk to the team
 - Expand scope as needed

Trap # 7

- Don't really know what you want to accomplish
- What can happen
 - Team does not know their objectives
 - Do not find the root cause of the problems
 - Recommendations do not address the objectives
- Solution
 - Define the “desired state” before the start of the assessment
 - Clearly convey the objectives to both upper management and the team

Trap # 8

- Try to implement all the recommendations at once
- What can happen
 - Process becomes overwhelming and you give up
 - Nothing gets accomplished
- Solution
 - Prioritize the recommendations
 - Implement the recommendations incrementally
 - Check to make sure the problem is resolved

Trap # 9

- Do not act on the recommendations
- What can happen
 - Problems continue
 - Time and money wasted
- Solution
 - Be committed to act on the recommendations
 - Do not delay making the changes
 - Involve the whole organization
 - Communicate
 - Plan for resistance

Trap # 10

- No follow-up performed within 12 months
- What can happen
 - Don't know if you solved the problems
 - Don't know if you created new problems
- Solution
 - Schedule a follow-up assessment within 12 months
 - Commit to that schedule
 - Use previous assessment and implementation plan as a baseline
 - Make sure follow-up is unbiased

Conclusion

- Assessments identify areas for improvement
- Upper management needs to be committed to improvement
- Assessment needs to be viewed as unbiased
- Prioritize recommendations
- Plan for resistance
- Commit to a follow-up assessment

Questions



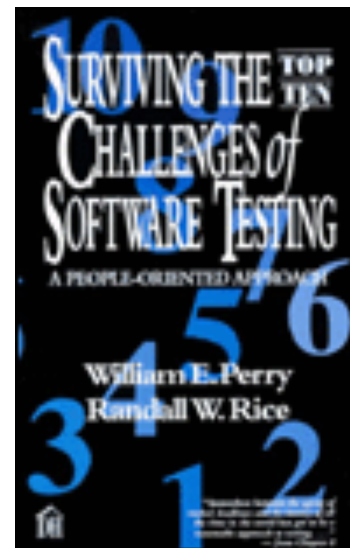
Resources

- Free assessment checklist
 - http://www.riceconsulting.com/assessment_checklist.docx
 - You can customize for your own projects
 - You can reproduce without permission

Drawing



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And the Winner is...

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