

built in methods for this as well. Methods vary, but essentially, the ideas are first sorted into topic categories (by the software or by participants), duplications culled, rough evaluation/culling by participants, and then serious evaluation of the most worthwhile set. This step usually uses a weighted scoring system, ranking, and ultimate culling to the few that will be implemented immediately; evaluation judgments can also be weighted by the evaluator's professed judgment experience, or by the manager's assigned weights on each individual's scorings. The software even provides for this as well, using implementation boxes, name assignments, implementation steps and dates, and so on. At the end of the meeting (in the case of the insurance firm lasting from 9:00 to 4:30) a full plan of action has been developed to deal with the problem stated at the top of the meeting. And, anonymity has been maintained up to the point of action.

There is a down side, of course, and problems are: (1) the method may be oversold as a cure-all, (2) it requires some keyboarding skill (though this will be less as new entry technology advances), (3) there is loss of power for some senior people, (4) there is less social interaction (though more than one might expect), (5) there is overload during editing and evaluation, (6) the facilities and software are still relatively expensive, and (7) not all topics are suitable (though new product ideation is very suitable).

Controlling the Product Creation Process, Herman Vantrappen and John Collins, *Prism* (Second quarter 1993), pp. 59-73

Today's managements worry about their cross-functional new product team systems. How can they gain the team advantages without losing control over them? Will there be loss of functional excellence? What happens to individual accountability? How much wasted effort is there when tasks proceed in parallel?

The authors believe an appropriate control system should be modeled after the metaphor of mountain-climbers' nightly bivouacs. This means milestones, but definitely not those associated with border crossing points. A mountain-climbing team considers nightly whether its objective was met for that day, whether unanticipated problems appeared, whether supplies and equipment were ready for the next day, whether assistance should be called up from the base camp, and so on. The review is positive and designed to facilitate progress, not to inhibit or restrict it.

So the proposed system for controlling new products builds around those same issues. First, is there a project plan that identifies all milestone events? Second, are the deliverables for each milestone clearly defined in advance? Third, do the review meetings involve people appropriate to the issues, force action on each problem rather than letting it be overridden, and assure that all functional needs are being addressed?

The authors prefer standard frameworks for all projects, with common vocabulary, reduced start-up time spent in defining structures, and the use of benchmarking. But control structures must also reflect natural breaks unique to each situation. Milestone reviews are usually associated with times where functional roles change sharply, where deliverables come due, or where key resource decisions must be made.

No structure of milestones will accomplish much unless it has a clear statement of its deliverables—tangible, quantitative, assessable. It would appear that a mountain-climbing team might have a difficult bivouac meeting if a snowstorm keeps them from assessing just where they are.

The third issue, the proper review process to use at each review meeting, is difficult. "Most companies have far too many boards and committees to steer and supervise the product creation process As one board proves ineffective, another one is added." The authors call for a zero-based rethinking of the process.

The article goes on to show various control charts A.D. Little has worked with, and speaks to the traditional questions of controlling tightly enough but not too tightly. Their thoughts are in the new product construct.

Product Adaptability: Assessment and Strategy, Daryl O. McKee and Sid Konell, *Journal of Product and Brand Management* (1993, vol. 2, no. 2), pp. 33-47 (GPL)

Adaptability rather than predictability is emerging as a dominant issue in new product strategy. A product launch is only a tentative commitment to a malleable product, because after launch the item may be adapted to meet changing market conditions. This article presents a framework for systematically assessing product adaptability, which is a firm's ability to change products and their support systems.

The framework consists of two underlying dimensions: *product domain* (single versus multiple product