

University of Groningen

## Design of a Methodology to Support Software Release Decisions

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## EPILOGUE

*“Time wasted is existence; used is life.”*  
*-- Edward Young --*

### *Original Objectives*

People have personal reasons for conducting PhD research. Some people see obtaining a degree as a necessary step in pursuing an academic career; others are driven to make a contribution to the existing body of knowledge; others may want to satisfy a need to be at the leading edge of their research phenomenon. Other reasons or combinations of reasons will exist.

What were my reasons? I found two:

- ❖ The first reason was to try to slow myself down. I have always put pressure on myself to finish my work well and quickly, irrelevant of whether I had to finish it quickly. I prefer an empty head and desk, but as soon as I start to reach this situation, I start, fanatically, to think of something new to undertake. It may be a compulsive need for growth. So, a research project was a new experience. My desk was not empty during these research years and my head has been continuously tortured with the subject of my research.
- ❖ The second reason was that I enjoy this type of creative journey. In my professional career over the previous two decades, there was always an urge to convert creative ideas into quick business results. This hampered the creative process and prevented me exploring a subject in depth. My objective in this research was to investigate an interesting subject thoroughly, and enjoy the voyage of discovery, without being bothered by the question of whether there is a clear business case for the results. I have always strived to make a contribution to the body of knowledge, although, when looking back, I may well have learned more about research philosophies, approaches and strategies, and about myself.

### *Evaluation*

The journey is over. It lasted more than 3 years, but I experienced it as far longer. 37,684 kilometres by car and train, 26 overnight stays, purchase of 55 books [2 excellent and 46 absolutely worthless], 28 articles published, mostly in popular Dutch and Swiss magazines but also one in the refereed Software Quality Professional [co-authored by a person from one of the exploratory case studies], 5 presentations at international conferences [London twice, Rome, Eindhoven and Amsterdam] with 2 still planned [Moscow in 2005 and Nashville in 2006], and close on 300,000 words written. This information is neither complete nor altogether reliable. In fact, these numbers do not matter at all! The objective was neither to maximize any number nor to optimize among different parameters.

A final question needs to be answered. Did I meet my objectives in starting this journey? The first reason was to slow myself down. Objective met? Yes and no. I have never felt the pressure to finish this journey as fast as possible. The contrary is the case. Extending the research would not have been a problem, although I was disappointed in not finding financial funding for this [at least in my eyes] important study. On the other hand, combining research with consulting activities has not always been an easy task, especially when both activities take place abroad. The result has been long working days during specific periods of time, much travelling in Switzerland and between The Netherlands and Switzerland, and staying over in very different types of hotels and pensions ranging from cheap, quiet and comfortable [mainly in Germany] to expensive, noisy and very uncomfortable [mainly in The Netherlands].

The second reason to start this thesis was to enjoy this creative journey. Objective met? Definitely yes! I have learned a lot about doing proper research, extended my knowledge in the field of software management/engineering, and was introduced to relatively new disciplines like economics and [social] psychology. In retrospect the most enjoyable part has been writing this thesis. It had a striking resemblance to solving a jigsaw puzzle without a picture at hand of the end result, only a background to the subject. At the start, one is eager to sketch the outline and the first parts are written without too much effort; they are the easy parts. In the next phase, one starts realising the difficulties and the amount of work still ahead, but at the same time knowing, or at least hoping, there will be an end. When the end result comes into sight, one cannot be stopped anymore and acceleration takes place. And finally, once finished, one looks back, and asks one's self; did I waste my precious time or has this all been worth the effort? Yes, it has satisfied my personal aspiration level and impacted the direction of my future career considerably. On January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, I started to work as a Visiting Scientist for the Software Engineering Institute with the objective of continuing my research activities.

What about the release of this thesis? Principally, the same trade-off applies; release now or later? Releasing it too early means high maintenance and repair costs later, with more sessions probably needing to discuss things [increased travelling], releasing it too late is also a waste of scarce resources [my time]. Looking back, I think I have released the first version below the zone of cost effectiveness; too early. I was confronted with time pressure, by scheduling the first release date before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005. As a result, the first two reviewers, Egon and Rini, had to go through a relatively low-quality document, meaning most of their review work had to be re-done when confronted with the second version, and rather drastic changes. I apologize for this, knowing they had to incur most post-release costs. I promise I will not make the same mistake in my next PhD research. Another research project? Yes, I would like to study the history of astronomical clocks and the different mathematical models that can be used to design them. But first, I would like a small break.

Finally, I conclude with a Reuters' press release that caught my eye when completing this thesis. It again illustrates, and emphasizes, the importance of further studies in the area of release decisions.

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“DaimlerChrysler Recalls 1.3 Million Mercedes Vehicles”

**By REUTERS**

Published: March 31, 2005

FRANKFURT, March 31 (Reuters) - U.S.-German carmaker DaimlerChrysler is recalling 1.3 million Mercedes cars as it tries to fix quality issues that are riddling its German luxury car division, it said on Thursday.

In its biggest ever recall, DaimlerChrysler will recall the Mercedes cars in several model ranges worldwide to fix problems with alternators and batteries. They do not affect the cars' safety, according to the supplier, car-parts maker Robert Bosch.

Mercedes chief Eckhard Cordes, who said earlier this year that his drive to resolve the quality problems would hit this year's earnings, said the cars Mercedes now makes are of high quality and that the recall addressed legacy problems.

*“We are now producing the best product quality ever and our aim is to ensure that those vehicles in the hands of customers which are the cause of complaints achieve a standard of quality that reflects our highest expectations,”* he said in a statement.

DaimlerChrysler declined to say how much the recall would cost but Georg Stuerzer, an analyst at HVB Group in Munich, estimated it could be in the hundreds of millions of euros.

*“On this kind of scale I expect the cost to run into the three-digit million-euro range. The quality campaign will weigh further on the company’s first quarter,”* said Stuerzer, who rates the stock ‘outperform’ with a price target of 39 euros.

Shares in DaimlerChrysler dipped after news of the recall, paring earlier gains to trade up 0.1 percent at 34.51 euros by 14:17 GMT, in line with the blue-chip DAX index, which was 0.2 percent higher.

Mercedes said it would check and if necessary replace the voltage regulator in the alternator on vehicles with six- and eight-cylinder petrol engines built between June 2001 and November 2004 in the recall.

The carmaker will install new battery-control software on E-class and CLS-class models made from January 2002 to January 2005. In addition, it will update the braking system on current E-class, SL-class and CLS-class models, made since June 2001.

Mercedes has traditionally been Daimler’s most lucrative business, but a collapse in profits at the division caused DaimlerChrysler to miss analysts’ expectations for fourth-quarter profit.

Mercedes’ profits have been hit by a strong euro, the cost of launching new models, and increased spending to fix quality problems, as well as losses at its Smart minicar brand, for which it is working on a strategic review.

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