The Embedded Muse 1

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Tracking Bugs

I don't believe in making a big fuss about bugs when you're developing a product. Fix them as you find them; maintain a zero-length bug list at all times so you're not faced with a swamp of angry and nasty problems at the "end" of a project.

That said, once the product hits the market things change. It's unrealistic and perhaps unwise to fix post-release bugs as soon as they are discovered. New hardware and software releases are quite expensive, despite technologies like flash that permit in-circuit reprogramming of software and PLDs.

It is indeed necessary to track and manage bugs after release. Far too many outfits use nothing more than a poorly-organized file folder filled with random scraps of paper noting bugs as they get reported. Without a consistent form (at least!) you're bound to forget to record critical bug info: who reported it, under what conditions it occurs, and the like.

Bugs reflect the product's quality, and so perhaps represent the most important post-release technology management issue. It's unforgivable to either lose bug information or to fix a bug but neglect the customer who reported it. Further, bug management - or "defect tracking" as it's more commonly called - sheds light on the development process itself.

You need tools to help manage the inevitable bugs. Whether it's a carefully managed three ring binder of bug reports, a custom database application, or a commercial product, do come up with a system for dealing efficiently with these problems.

I recommend buying instead of inventing a system. Two commercial defect tracking products are Bugbase from Archimedes (http://www.archimedesinc.com/bugbase.htm) and Visual Intercept from Elsitech (http://www.elsitech.com).

Thought for the Week

"General Perception Fault - Reality Terminated..."

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About The Embedded Muse

The Embedded Muse is an occasional newsletter sent via email by Jack Ganssle. Send complaints, comments, and contributions to him at jack@ganssle.com.

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