



# TeraTech News

**Software connections to your information.**

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## Why to Use Your Whole Brain for Programming

*The following was written by TeraTech President, Michael Smith*

Why do I use the whole brain for programming as well as the traditional left brain skills such as logical thinking and syntax? Because it makes for better programs and happier clients. For example a right brain tool such as mindmapping lets me diagram out website requirements in a visual format. I can't explain why but I come up with more new ideas and connections in a 2-D mindmap than I do in a 1-D bulleted list. Perhaps it is seeing "distant" items on the mindmap and being able to consider them as being linked. Or perhaps it is the easy way it is to move branches of a mindmap around the diagram. Whatever the reason, it leads to better software design and better group meetings too.

Similarly I find the use of wireframes and exact HTML prototypes allows for a quantum level improvement of client to programmer communication over the traditional heavy document specs. No matter how detailed a spec document is written it seems that it is impossible for clients to visualize how the software will be in real use until *after* the software is written. Of course that is too late in the project and leads to project failure (either a budget overrun or project cancellation or even worse shelfware software that end users don't use). But the hands on clickability of a wireframe or a prototype lets all project stakeholders give feedback earlier in our software development process. As they used to say in old day Chicago politics "Feedback early, Feedback often"!

If you are interested in other whole brain programming techniques I will be speaking about it at CFUNITED/Express [Chicago](#) in a few weeks.

<http://express.cfunitied.com/go/chicago/2007/>

## TeraTech Development Approach

TeraTech has adopted the standard Fusebox Lifecycle Process (FLiP) methodology for managing the design and development of new software systems.

The **FLiP** method described below is a process for identification of system requirements through an iterative engagement with the client and system users. It has proven effective in reducing the often expensive efforts to identify system requirements and obtain client approval and authorization.

Web design and implementation in ColdFusion with Fusebox has been greatly simplified with the development of the **Fusebox Lifecycle Process (FLiP)**. The TeraTech approach for new system development has combined some of the features of the FLiP process to create a robust and flexible set of design methods. FLiP provides a process for discovery of design requirements and obtaining client approval which reduces risks associated with traditional design systems.

## The two Fundamental ideas behind FLiP

- The first is to use a process that is, at all times, closely tied to client feedback.
- The second is to encourage inexpensive changes in the design early in the process, resulting in a reduced need for changes later in the process, when those changes become progressively more expensive.

*To be continued in next month's newsletter....*

## Why IT Projects Fail

*The following was written by TeraTech's Senior Project Manager, Nii Dowuona*

If you're reading this article and for some magical means all the projects you have been part of have succeeded, then you might want to skip this entry. If you're still reading, then just like me, you have been on projects that failed miserably. Needless to say, I have always learned something new from failed projects. The question is, "What makes IT projects unbearably susceptible to failure?"

I read an article by one Dr. Paul Dorsey and he discussed the "Top 10 Reasons Why Systems Projects

Fail" and thought I'll share his thoughts with fellow IT managers and those who work on IT projects.

1. Don't use a specific methodology because coding is all that is really important.
2. Create the project plan by working backwards from a drop-dead system completion date.
3. Don't bother with a data model. Just build whatever tables you need.
4. Use a Technical Lead that has never built a similar system. Hiring such talent is too expensive.
5. Hire forty developers to make the coding go faster.
6. Build the system in Java, even though most of the development team still thinks that Java is coffee and you have no intention of ever deploying to the Web.
7. Three months before the system goes live, assign one junior developer to handle the data migration.
8. Skip the testing phase because the project is way behind schedule.
9. Change the system to support critical new requirements discovered during final development.
10. Buy a commercial, off-the-shelf package and customize it ... a lot.

#### Photos from TeraTech's Recent Visit to Smithsonian



TeraTech is creating a news content management system with auto RSS input for the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in DC. More photos from our visit can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/teratech/>

#### Work with "I Drive Smart" Rewarding in More Ways Than One

I Drive Smart is a unique driving school offering driver education by law enforcement - the most highly qualified driver education instructors in the state of Maryland. All of their instructors are either off-duty or retired police officers. TeraTech was asked to take over the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of an existing website for [www.IDriveSmart.com](http://www.IDriveSmart.com).

One of our developers, Jo Ann Goertner, was assigned to lead the project. As she does on all of her projects, she wanted to learn something about I Drive Smart and their mission. As a parent who has recently witnessed her daughter begin to drive, she became intrigued by an article written about the school in 2004 shortly after the school was opened. "While lots of things have changed - more cars, more locations, more instructors - what impressed me most, and even brought a tear to my eye, was the owners' heartfelt commitment to making a difference and their reasons for starting the school. I

Drive Smart is the kind of client that I can truly feel proud to work with." More at the TeraTech blog <http://teratech.com/blog/index.cfm/2007/9/19/Working-with-I-Drive-Smart-Rewarding-in-More-Ways-Than-One>

#### Managing Takes Thought

It used to be when managers had new and challenging situations they needed resolve that they'd read expert information and discuss it with friends/colleagues; then they'd think about what they'd read/heard and synthesize the input, tweaking it so it would fit their [MAP](#) and the situation perfectly and, in doing so, it became an approach that they truly owned.



Best, management skills evolved, both personally and on a wider front as they shared their solutions with other managers, who also thought about it, adding and subtracting based on their situation, experience and MAP.

Rarely did managers use the whole cloth from just one source, but, unfortunately, I find that happening more often these days.

Granted, the demands on managers' time are greater than ever, but this trend seems to be based more in a belief that most, if not all, solutions are available on the Net if one searches long enough and because too many managers seem to feel that if a solution is a better-than-50% fit, it can be used as is.

Of course, that's often better than the "do first, think later" school of management.

But the way to become a great manager is to mull, accept, reject, evolve and even change your MAP as you digest and apply the information around you.

Miki Saxon is President of RampUp Solutions, Inc. and provides products and coaching based on [MAP \(mindset, attitude, philosophy\)](#)<sup>TM</sup>.

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#### TERATECH CUSTOM PROGRAMMING & TRAINING

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- Flex, Flash, AJAX, VisualBasic
- SQL, Oracle, DB2, Access, FoxPro
- XML, Numeric Analysis