Next Top Model: A Requirements Engineering Reality Panel

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Abstract

This panel builds upon a growing wave of reality television shows and proposes to go in search of requirements engineering's very own next top model. Through a series of tasks, some pre-prepared and some assigned on the fly, a number of small teams will compete for this prestigious title. Teams will be challenged to illustrate the power and flexibility of their favorite approach for requirements modeling, while conference participants will act as the ultimate judges as they vote approaches off the panel round-by-round. Does the requirements engineering community have any brave modelers? Is the requirements engineering community ready for a model showdown? Come to the panel session and find out!

1. Models Everywhere

"Although it may be the case that everything is a model … it is more generally true that anything can be a model. This is the consequence of models being ...."*representations to ourselves of what we do, of what we want, and what we hope for...'* [2]" [1].

Requirements engineers create models. As a community, our repertoire of modeling languages and notations is abundant. These range from formal specification languages to the structured use of natural language text; from the diagrams of the Unified Modeling Language to the distinct graphical notations associated with i* or the User Requirements Notation (URN). Of course, sometimes nothing quite surpasses the use of a quick freehand sketch on the back of an envelope or an informal rich picture to express our understanding of a stakeholder's needs. Given such variety, the discerning requirements engineer selects and combines modeling approaches based upon task and context. Nevertheless, most requirements engineers favor certain approaches and repeatedly use them to solve a wide range of modeling problems.

This panel's mission is to search for the most versatile, comprehensible, expressive, and all-round most useful modeling technique to have in our toolbox – that is, requirements engineering's next top model.

2. Call for Models and Modelers

Prior to the panel, we will be soliciting candidate modeling techniques from the requirements engineering community. Each of the selected models will be represented by a team of two to three requirements engineers who are ready, willing and able to defend their approach under pressure. A sense of humor will be required.

3. Tasks and the Elimination Process

Each team will be presented with an initial problem description in advance of RE'09 and tasked to express their initial understanding of the problem using their modeling approach. They will present this in round one of the panel, where they will be allowed to interact with the customer to elicit more information through asking a limited number of questions. The panel will comprise a series of four short rounds where teams will receive rapid follow-on tasks and present their evolving work. Teams will not see each other's work and will be isolated between rounds as they prepare for their next task. From round two onwards, quick-fire audience voting will eliminate teams, leading to the ultimate model showdown!

4. Warning!

This reality panel does not require contestants to wear swimsuits and it will not be broadcast on cable television. Those seeking such publicity are directed to: *www.cwtv.com/shows/americas-next-top-model*.

5. References

[1] Morris, S.J. and Gotel, O.C.Z. Model or mould? A challenge for better traceability. *Proceedings of the International Workshop on Modeling in Software Engineering (MISE'07)*. Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, 20-26 May, 2007.

[2] Wartofsky, M.W. *Models, Representations and the Scientific Understanding.* Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Volume XLVIII. Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979.