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## Notes on “Policy”

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### Preface

*Purpose:* To capture some concerns I have on how the word “policy” is used in the CMM effort and how policies are written.

*Audience:* The OEO CMM team who attended the May 1 conference call, to whom I said I would send some clarification.

It seems to me that any policy statement that we make as part of doing the CMM work needs to be written in terms of the company, organization, people, products, work, tools, and culture that are part of our daily work life at HP. Even if a policy is high-level, I think it needs to read like a meaningful, local, real, direct, and changeable document.

The one document in Odin that I came across having to do with CMM policies at the OEO level is [http://odin.rsn.hp.com/dscgi/ds.py/Get/File-770/CMM\\_CHO\\_POLICY\\_STATEMENTS.doc](http://odin.rsn.hp.com/dscgi/ds.py/Get/File-770/CMM_CHO_POLICY_STATEMENTS.doc). I understand this to have been done by the overall CMM Committee that is leading the CMM work for OEO.

The policy in this document for SCM is 4 sentences, lifted out of TR-25, p. L2-76 and L2-77 (pp. 166-167 of the PDF file); these pages are in the *Level 2 Key Practices* chapter. The single *key practice* in that chapter for the “Commitment to Perform” *common idea* for the SCM KPA is Co.1: “The project follows a written organizational policy for implementing software configuration management (SCM).” The descriptive information following the statement of the key practice states that “This policy typically specifies that ...” and then gives 4 sentences. The only difference between those 4 sentences and the 4 sentences in the Odin document is that the word “is” in TR-25 is changed to “shall” in the Odin document.

The phrasing “This policy typically specifies that” in TR-25 is indicative of the fact that the CMM is a descriptive framework, not a prescriptive one. I believe that “typically specifies that” means that an auditor, reading our organization’s SCM policy, would either agree or disagree that the policy has characteristics such as those 4 mentioned in TR-25; the auditor is not going to expect a slight changing of the wording of TR-25.

I think that §4.1 of TR-25 (p. 46 of the PDF file), *Interpreting the Key Practices*, contains the relevant guidance on this matter. One sentence in particular suggests to me that we have to write our SCM policy in our own terms: “Therefore, the approach is to describe the principles and leave their implementation up to each organization, according to its culture and the experiences of its managers and technical staff.” In addition, the Co.1 key practice states that “The project *follows* a written organization policy...” (emphasis added). I believe that a policy has to be written in the specifics of the organization, its people and tools and culture, for it be “followable” [if there is such a word]. I believe the average developer working on HP-UX would NOT know what to do if told to follow the SCM policy as stated in the CHO\_CMM\_POLICY\_STATEMENTS.doc document.

I tried to draft the kind of policy I think is needed (only for the document management aspect of this KPA, and only for EIAL) in the “strawman draft” of the EIAL-level policies for document management, available at the URL <http://odin.rsn.hp.com/dscgi/ds.py/Get/File-998/EIAL-DocMgmt-Policies.pdf>, as a test case for these thoughts. I don’t think I necessarily got it right, and it may not meet the “typically specifies” attribute discussed above; however, at this point, our Lab manager (Art Sabsevitz) is comfortable with this draft and the behavior it is trying to shape. I think something similar is needed for the source code aspect of the SCM KPA. Perhaps, as someone suggested in the meeting yesterday, this kind of policy statement is more appropriate at the lab level than at the OEO level.

That summarizes, quickly, what I was trying to express at yesterday’s conference call.