



What's in It for YOU?

SEPG[®]2012 | *Reaching New Levels
of Excellence*
NORTH AMERICA

Top 10 Ways
to get the most value from
the industry's top conference

PAGE 1

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Introduction

Howdy, Partner!

Are planning to attend the SEPG North America 2012 Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico next week?

If your answer is **NO** – this eBook is for you. Not because I hope you'll change your mind and come (although [registration is still open](#)), but because I'm hoping you'll read it and get inspired to join us next time.

And if your answer is **YES** – this eBook is for you too. "Top Ten Ways to Get the Most Value from the Industry's Top Conference" is chock full of information and tips about maximizing your experience down in the desert.

After all, your time is valuable. You want to make sure you are investing it properly. That's what this eBook aims to help you do.

It all started as a series of guest posts on the [SEPG Conference blog](#). The Software Engineering Institute (SEI) asked me to share my Top Ten Reasons for Attending the Conference this year. Then it spilled over to my popular [AsktheCMMIAppraiser.com](#) blog.

And now I'm inviting you, as a leader of your organization, to ride along with us on this 10-chapter eBook journey to the SEPGNA Conference.

So put on your cowboy boots, saddle up and join us for a rootin' tootin' good time. It's ...

What's in It for YOU?

The Top 10 Ways to Get the Most Value from the Industry's Top Conference

The #10 Reason to Attend SEPGNA 2012: It's all about you!

Howdy, Partners! So you want to know why y'all should hop on 'ol Hot-n-Dusty and mosey on down to Albuquerque for this year's SEPG 2012 Conference on March 12-15? I may be a blue-bellied Yankee from the mitten state, but I'm fixin' to give you the top 10 reasons for headin' down to the BBQ. Just as soon as I drop this phony cowpoke accent!

OK, enough of that! To go along with the [12 Key Take-Aways](#) that Brittney posted on the SEPG Conference blog last week, I've developed my own list of Top 10 Reasons to attend the SEPGNA 2012, starting today with Reason #10.

Drum roll, please! Reason #10 is ...

It's all about you.

As you know if you've attended the conference in the past, SEPGNA is *the* premier [software process improvement](#) conference. Hundreds of professionals come from around the world to learn, network and explore solutions to their performance problems. These are the folks who have been driving SEPGNA's reputation as the Greatest Show on Earth.

This year, the Show is even greater. The format has been honed even sharper to meet you where you are in your professional growth. The theme is *Reaching New Levels of Excellence ...* and that's YOUR excellence we're talking about.

What this means is that you can expect to come away with real life, practical and implementable solutions that will help you take your business to that next level. The Program Committee selected approximately 100 technical sessions. Whether your interest is multi-model, practical process improvement, high maturity, [agile and CMMI](#), or any number of other disciplines, each is designed to dive into the principles and practices that can help your organization better understand how to harness the power of process improvement.

The variety of learning opportunities alone is incredible. Whether you are new to the profession or a seasoned practitioner of the organizational excellence within the [CMMI](#), there is a technical session for you. Check out the full slate of [programs](#).

Now turn the page for Reason #9!

The #9 Reason to Attend SEPGNA: To Form Strategic Partnerships

Howdy, Partners! My name is Jeff, but most people call me ... Jeff.

Now, I know some of y'all cow-punchers saw my last hitchn' post – I mean blog post – about the Top Ten Reasons for coming to the SEI's big shindig "SEPG 2012" on March 12-15, and are already on that dusty trail down to Albuquerque to pick up your badges. But I reckon some are saying, "Badges? We don't need no stinking badges!" And so it's time once again for me to drop my phony cowpoke accent and give you Reason #9.

Whew, it almost hurts my jaw to talk like that! So now, in plain English, allow me to continue present my list of Top 10 Reasons to attend SEPGNA 2012.

Drum roll, please! Reason #9 is ...

It's a great place to form successful business partnerships.

Let's face it, we've all got one thing in common. We're all trying to make our companies as successful as possible. That's why it's good to have strategic relationships with compatible companies when you need them. And there's no better place to form these relationships than at SEPGNA!

You want proof? At last year's SEPG conference in Portland, I had a discussion with another [SEI Partner](#) about his service offerings and our service offerings.

This Partner runs a very successful and innovative training business and we run a [CMMI consulting](#) firm. We discovered our offerings were complimentary, so we struck an informal agreement to refer some business to each other when it made sense for our clients. Nothing fancy, just a handshake.

Since then, I've referred him a number of class participants. And, just recently, he referred us to a great new client, an information technology company. Although we were already in discussions with this company his referral helped them make a decision that was right for them – and we earned their business.

That, my friend, is a first-hand account of the type of relationships and partnerships that are formed at every SEPGNA conference. That alone is a good enough reason to go, isn't it?

Need more? Turn the page for Reason #8.

The #8 Reason to Attend SEPGNA: To Have Meaningful Conversations

Howdy, Partners! Albuquerque Jeff here. I know some bushwhackers who wouldn't know a blog post from a hitchn' post, so you must be purdy smart to be reading my Top Ten Reasons for coming out west to the [SEPG North America](#) rodeo on March 12-15 in Albuquerque. Now I'll just drop my phony cowpoke accent, and get straight to Reason #8.

You know, if I keep this up, I might forget how to talk in plain English! So, with no more nonsense, allow me to continue my list of Top 10 Reasons to attend [SEPG North America 2012](#).

Drum roll, please! Reason #8 is ...

It's a great place to have meaningful conversations.

Every year, the [SEPG North America](#) conference draws a wide variety of engineering and software professionals, who come from a vast array of disciplines. Some want more information on multi-model approaches. Some are interested in practical process improvement, while others get passionate about high maturity. And don't get me started on [agile and CMMI](#)!

This year, with the theme *Reaching New Levels of Excellence*, the 24th annual SEPG North America conference will give Partners and companies even more to talk about. We'll discuss both principle and practice. We'll talk about CMMI and process improvement. We'll share best practices, tips and techniques. We'll dig into what we're all doing to deliver value. And we'll have a back-and-forth on how to maximize impact and business results that we can all take home to our organizations.

And what better place for conversations about the power of process improvement than at SEPGNA, with people like you and me, who get it?

So come on down and talk with folks who understand.

Need more reasons? Turn the page for Reason #7.

The #7 Reason to Attend SEPGNA: Albuquerque is a treasure of the Southwest

Howdy, Partners! As anybody with horse sense knows, I'm a straight-shooter (maybe a little too straight I've been told). There ain't no ballyhoo to my Top 10 Reasons for moseying down to the [SEPG North America](#) rodeo on March 12-15 in Albuquerque. Now, before y'all start raising Cain about my phony cowpoke accent, allow me to drop it like a hot tater, and give you Reason #7.

So, without further delay, let's get on with my list of Top 10 Reasons to attend [SEPG North America 2012](#).

Drum roll, please! Reason #7 is ...

Albuquerque is a treasure of the American Southwest.

As you may know, every year a different, unique location plays host to the [SEPG North America](#) conference.

This year, the [24th annual SEPG North America conference](#) is in Albuquerque, New Mexico. You'll keep busy with 100 technical sessions, designed to equip you with implementable solutions that can help you *Reach New Levels of Excellence* and achieve a positive return on your investment from process improvement. But you'll have some free time, too, and may want to do some exploring.

Here are some of the many unforgettable experiences awaiting you in Albuquerque:

- Immerse yourself in rich Southwestern culture and heritage
- Soak in the blue skies and sun that shines 310 days a year
- Breathe in the high desert air scented with sage and piñon
- Shop for authentic Native American jewelry
- Try hot air ballooning
- Visit living history museums
- Enjoy Albuquerque events and festivals
- Sample local cuisines
- Hit the golf courses and spas
- Relax by the pool with the CMMI book (no napping!)

... and much more. So come on down for the great technical sessions, powerful networking opportunities, and that life-giving sunshine.

Need more reasons to go? Turn the page for Reason #6.

The #6 Reason to Attend SEPGNA: There's gold in them thar hills

Howdy, Partners – hope you got your spurs on, because I've got another one of my Top 10 Reasons for giddy-uppin' down to the [SEPG North America](#) rodeo on March 12-15 in Albuquerque. I know some of y'all already had your fill. But if you're looking for even more reasons to come ... as John Wayne used to say, "Young fella, I'll accommodate ya" ... just as soon as I drop my phony cowpoke accent.

Let's get on with my list of Top 10 Reasons to attend [SEPG North America 2012](#).

Drum roll, please! Reason #6 is ...

There's gold in them thar hills.

Yes, my friends, gold, as in golden opportunities. Every year, the [SEPG North America](#) conference attracts engineering and software professionals from some of the finest organizations in our country, and beyond. That makes the conference an outstanding to network and develop new business relationships.

As you may know, the conference draws everyone from [CMMI Lead Appraisers](#) to [CMMI](#) program sponsors to folks who are just learning how to spell "[CMMI](#)." They all come together out of a common interest in process, performance, and organizational improvement. Some are actively looking for a potential [SEI Partner](#). And some have already gotten attached to one. But I've found that there is plenty of opportunity for sponsors to meet Partners, and Partners to meet sponsors during the many technical presentation and networking events.

True story: Last year, in Portland, I gave a presentation called "[The Agile SCAMPI: Taming the Savage Beast](#)." There was a decent crowd (ok, some came just for the hats I was tossing out for free) and I hope they received some good information about making Appraisals simpler and more Agile.

One company in the audience was in the process of tackling a large-scale, multi-location process improvement initiative. They needed help with planning, training, and conducting a multi-site [SCAMPI Appraisal](#). They had already zeroed in on a small set of Partners to choose from but after my speech they added me to the list. Just like that! I ultimately started working with them and it was a win for everyone involved.

What lesson did I learn from this? Come for the great technical sessions, but stay for the networking. You never know when you're shaking hands with your next big client – or finding your next Partner.

Need more reasons to go? Turn the page for Reason #5.

The #5 Reason to Attend SEPGNA: It's where learning begins.

Howdy, Partners – we're just two hoots and a holler away from the world's greatest [CMMI](#) round-up, [SEPG North America](#), on March 12-15 in Albuquerque, and by gum, it's time to share another one of my rootin-tootin Top 10 Reasons to be there. I reckon you don't need much more convincin', but there's pleasure in the sharin' ... 'specially once I drop this here phony New Mexico cowpoke accent.

So let's get on with my list of Top 10 Reasons to attend [SEPG North America 2012](#).

Drum roll, please! Reason #5 is ...

It's where learning begins.

I've found that most of us share the burning desire for lifelong learning. That's why we read books, articles, and blogs. It's why we listen to speakers and take professional development classes. And most importantly, it's why we come together on a regular basis: to learn.

By now you probably know that one of the places where learning begins in our industry is at the SEPG Conference. Learning experiences range from formal presentations, day-long tutorials, and half-day workshops to informal conversations and social interactions. Here, you get to rub elbows with some of the finest professionals in the engineering process improvement and CMMI universe. We all share strategies and tactics, tips and techniques, best practices to adopt, and pitfalls to avoid. And we'll have the truly unforgettable experience of building on our skills and knowledge, together.

Many of you, like me, will be coming back to the [SEPGNA Conference](#). (This is actually my umpteenth trip!) I can honestly say that I learn something new every time I go.

Personally, what I find most valuable to learn about are actual client experiences. I gravitate toward presentations that delve deeply into the topic, and like to learn the most from people's actual experiences.

For example, at past SEPG conferences, I've learned about new ways that appraisals are conducted to be more agile and efficient. I've learned new techniques for how to interact with sponsors. I've attended great presentations that offered lessons learned from dealing with executives. I've learned the 10 things you shouldn't do at a CMMI appraisal. And I've had fun too – with entertaining and interesting speakers like Pat O'Toole, Hillel Glazer, Bill Smith, Heather Oppenheimer, Judah Mogilensky, David Anderson, Mike Konrad, and many more.

We can expect even more at this year's [SEPGNA](#). On the docket are dozens of excellent speakers on many timely and relevant topics. So whatever you choose to attend, you'll have fun, learn a lot, and leave Albuquerque smarter about process improvement, CMMI, and many other topics than before you came.

Need more reasons to go? Turn the page for Reason #4.

The #4 Reason to Attend SEPGNA: To Build Stronger Relationships with Your Customers

Howdy, Partners – by the sun slanting in the Western sky, I see it's almost time for the [SEPG North America](#) rodeo on March 12-15 in Albuquerque. That means I better put a hitch in my giddy-up and get on with my Top 10 reasons to be there. Ready?

Then let's get on with my list of Top 10 Reasons to attend [SEPG North America 2012](#).

Drum roll, please! Reason #4 is ...

To build stronger relationships with your customers.

Building relationships with the customer is important in any industry. But it's absolutely critical in the context of the CMMI, where we are passionate about organizational process and performance improvement, and helping companies be as great as they can be.

So let me ask you this: will you take the opportunity to build stronger relationships with your customers by bringing them to SEPGNA 2012?

As part of my commitment to the [CMMI](#), I am bringing six of my customers to the conference this year. Last year I brought five. Here's why I think it's a good thing to do:

SEPGNA allows you to spend quality time with your customers. So often in our day-to-day work, we are on-site to solve problems. There are subgroups to be evaluated and artifacts to be collected. But down in Albuquerque, life moves at a slower pace. You'll be able to connect with your customers on a personal level. You'll share meals together, attend sessions together, and perhaps take in a round of golf together.

SEPGNA allows you to guide your customers through the learning process. With you by their side, customers can grasp the [real meaning of the CMMI](#), and the long-term value the model provides. And when questions come up, you'll be right there to answer with real-live examples from their current projects.

SEPGNA allows you to introduce your customers to both the SEI and other adopters of the CMMI. For me, this is one of the most rewarding experiences at the SEPGNA. I love to see new friendships form when I introduce my customers to the smart folks from the SEI, as well as to the broader community of people with the same problems they've been facing.

In my opinion, all of us – both the SEI and its Partners – should strive to be people-integrators. That means, part of our job is to integrate the customers with each other, so that they can have a support system of their own.

And you know what? I've never met a customer who wasn't excited about going.

So let's be generous and share some knowledge. I urge each of you to invite at least one customer to come – and we'll see you in Albuquerque!

Need more reasons to go? Turn the page for Reason #3.

The #3 Reason to Attend SEPGNA: To Build Stronger Relationships with Key SEI Leaders

Howdy, Partners – Whoopee ti yi yo, git along little dogies! It's time once again for my Top Ten reasons to go to the [SEPG North America](#) rodeo in Albuquerque on March 12-15. If you read this far, you know that [SEPG North America](#) is the place to be for anyone who is passionate about process improvement and the CMMI.

So let's load up the chuck-wagon and get on with my list of Top 10 Reasons to attend [SEPG North America 2012](#).

Drum roll, please! Reason #3 is ...

To build stronger relationships with key SEI leaders.

Introducing yourself to your hosts is not only the polite thing to do, it is one of the best reasons for going to the SEPGNA. Especially this year, when several key SEI leaders will be in attendance.

Since I'm limited to 300-500 words, I can't talk about ALL of the great folks over at the SEI, so today I'd like to call attention to four influential people that you'll want to be sure to meet at the Conference. They are:

1. Dr. Paul D. Nielsen. Paul is Director and Chief Executive Officer of the SEI. As you may know, part of Paul's role is to visit with key customers to help keep the SEI aligned with the needs of leading companies and organizations, which is good for the Partners as well. Talk to Paul about whether it makes sense for him to interact with your (or your client's) management team.
2. Anita Carleton. Anita is the Director of the Software Engineering Process Management (SEPM) Program at the SEI – and one awesome lady as well! Meeting Anita will give you an opportunity to learn about her vision for the program, and give you a chance to share your ideas as well. Like Paul, Anita travels to companies and organizations to interact with their management and help improve alignment. Both you and your customers will benefit from meeting Anita.
3. Rawdon ("Rusty") Young. Rusty is another influential leader in a new role. As [CMMI](#) Program Manager (acting), Rusty is the person to meet if you would like to hear about the future of the [CMMI](#), if you have some ideas for changes (don't forget to fill out a change request!), or about anything else regarding the [CMMI](#) that you want to talk about. He's your man!
4. Lisa Masciantonio. Lisa is head of the SEI Partner Network and is the main point of contact for all of the SEI Partners. If you have any Partner issues, Lisa is the one to go to. In fact, go to Lisa even if you don't have any issues! She's aweweeeesome!

As key representatives of the SEI at the SEPGNA Conference, Paul, Anita, Rusty, and Lisa are a big part of the face of a product line that is the best process model in the industry. It's up to us, as Partners, to get to know them, so that we can work more closely with them on reinforcing the brand. SEPGNA is the perfect place to do that. Be sure to introduce your customers to these fine individuals.

While I don't have space to write about ALL of the great people at the SEI, don't forget to connect with Eileen Forrester, Will Hays, Mike Konrad, and many others.

Need more reasons to go? Turn the page for Reason #2.

The #2 Reason to Attend SEPGNA: To Build Stronger Relationships with Other Partners

Howdy Partners! We've come a long way together down the hot and dusty trail. Now that the [SEPG North America](#) rodeo on March 12-March 15 in Albuquerque is almost here, we're almost to the end of my Top Ten reasons to be there. But I still have news for you: whether you're the quickest artifact herder, the coolest documentation roper, or the bravest process rider in the West ... at SEPGNA, you're wanted.

So let's get on with my list of Top 10 Reasons to attend [SEPG North America 2012](#).

Drum roll, please! Reason #2 is ...

To Build Stronger Relationships with Other Partners

As you know by now, I'm a big believer in relationships. I've already posted about the SEGP NA as THE place to build relationships with our customers (Reason #4) and key SEI leaders (Reason #3). I am even more passionate about building relationships with each other as Partners.

It's pretty clear to anyone who has developed and nurtured these types of relationships just how far-reaching and powerful a true partnership can be.

At SEPGNA we form, develop and nurture the relationships that matter most in our industry. You'll interact with other Partners and Lead Appraisers who, like you, are trying to make their clients successful. In this way, SEPGNA is more than a conference. It's a community of like-minded professionals.

I'd like to see more Partners harness the power of the Partner community. It's the one place where we can get to know each other, learn from each other and potentially even work together. The cool thing is, the more we do business together, the stronger we become as a community. And the reverse is also true: the stronger we are as a community, the more we do business together. You might say that the path to strong business is strong community.

As my good friend and competitor Bill Smith knows, I like to call it "co-opetition."

As a unified Partner group, we are building stronger relationships with the SEI and with our clients. But it goes beyond that. We are building a community that helps each other build business. And we want that!

Need more reasons to go? Turn the page for Reason #1.

The #1 Reason to Attend SEPGNA: The Social Experience

Howdy Partners. Land sakes alive, the big event in the 'ol West is nearly upon us! Yes, the [SEPG North America](#) rodeo is just a couple of shakes of a lamb's tail away (March 11 through March 15), and that means it's time to rope in my Top Ten reasons to be there. So today we're gonna get down to it and ride this steed into town – together.

So let's saddle up one last time and finish my list of Top 10 Reasons to attend [SEPG North America 2012](#).

Drum roll, please! Reason #1 is ...

The Social Experience.

That's right, the people! People are why we come together. People are what make us a community. As I mentioned in other posts, I've been coming to the Conference for the last umpteen years, and this is by far the best time of the year for me – due to the people.

We work and live in an amazing community of really sharp, forward-leaning people. Getting together every year at SEPGNA is a great way to interact and collaborate with them. We'll hang out, learn, talk, laugh and raise a glass to everyone's success.

I'm not just talking about Partners and SEI folks, either. Customers will be there, real –life adopters of the CMMI. You'll mix with a lot of different companies and have a chance to hear their experiences about how they did it, the good, the bad and the ugly. And if you hang out for happy hour you will REALLY hear some tales!

(Cue the Spaghetti Western whistle tune.)

Here are just a few of the many opportunities we'll have to socialize at this year's event:

Monday – the show opens in the afternoon with a big shindig on the conference floor. This is where many of us will be reunited for the first time since last year. Come out, meet vendors, meet old and new friends, and enjoy a beverage of your choice!

Also on Monday is the SEI Partner Lunch where Partners will meet old friends and get to know new ones. You'll have a chance to hear others' experiences with what's going on with the CMMI and the market. This will also be my first opportunity to speak with the Partner group in my new role as Chairman of the Partner Advisory Board. But it doesn't end there.

Tuesday – The good times carry over to the conference reception on Tuesday evening where you'll experience the CMMI social event of the century! OK, sounds pretty geeky, but it's always a great time.

After the reception stop out at the famous ISD party and its equally famous band – The Model Mappers! They play at [Gecko's Nob Hill](#) from 8:30 – 11:30 pm. It's just a short ride from the convention center. Every year, they really go all out for their customers, and everyone talks about it for months!

Wednesday – if you're one of Broadsword's customers, you are invited to join us for our annual Client Appreciation Dinner and User Group. It's a diverse, eclectic group, and we always meet

at one of the finest dining establishments in town. We'll eat, drink and be merry, well into the night. (Locate a Broadsword representative at SEPGNA for more info).

Other Partners put on events throughout the week, so keep your ear to the ground and you might just catch a late-night celebration.

Those are just a few of the formal events. But there are far more informal occasions to interact, talk and get to know each other better. Personally, I find these chance meetings to be among the most enjoyable of all.

Last year I had an impromptu discussion with David Greer, Hillel Glazer, and a few others on the need to collect CMMI User Stories, and a new research project was born! Stay tuned for our results on that one.

So that's it, my friends. Those are my Top Ten Reasons to attend the SEPGNA this year. As you can see, SEPG 2012 is a win-win, and everyone should come to ABQ next week. Best of all, it's not too late to [register](#) – and we'll see you in Albuquerque!

Need more reasons to go? You gotta be kidding me!

Jeff Dalton is President of [Broadsword Solutions Corporation](#) and the incoming Chairman of the SEI's Partner Advisory Board. He is a [SCAMPI Lead Appraiser](#) whose blog can be read at [www.asktheCMMIAppraiser.com](#). He can be reached at [appraiser@broadswordsolutions.com](#).