SCM Rules of Thumb

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Find an expert; make them as necessary.

- *Who's the person who makes sure you're playing to the strengths of the software?*
- At least one person should RTFM from cover to cover once.

Basic things to train for...

- *Basics for an administrator: setup, backup, testing restores.*
- *Basics for a developer: be able to explain how do “add/delete/edit” a file and how to avoid destroying other people’s work.*
- *Basics for a project lead: know how to make/deal with codelines and branches.*

Keep the "daily grind" simple

- ✍ *You should know the basics of your configuration. ("Working on //depot/main/... for new release work")*
- ✍ *Know, off top of head, commands to add/edit/delete/submit/revert a change, and how to avoid stomping other folks' work.*

Use default configurations when possible.

- *Use SCM primitives for NT/Unix “shared” work – don’t outsmart it.*
- *Type real change descriptions, not just “another change” or “fixed something”.*
- *Don’t complain if SCM system locks at submit-time instead of checkout-time. (Read enough to understand why.)*

Set up new development projects (and releases) correctly

- *Pick new pathnames carefully;*
- *Use SCM primitives ("p4 integrate") to create new codeline.*
- *If it's too hard, get help, read a manual, or e-mail Tech Support.*
- *Don't even start work unless the backup/restore strategy is robust.*

For god’s sake, don’t...

- *Don’t create a branch using the “add” operation.*
- *Don’t destroy other people’s work.*
- *Don’t type in something like “modified a file” into a change description.*
- *Don’t make the same change in two places.*
- *Don’t wait until the crash to test your “restore” strategy – and make sure it addresses a “Loma Prieta” surprise.*

For god's sake, don't...

- *Don't delete revisions.*
- *Don't make a check-in contain more than one unit of functionality or one bug fix.*

Know the foibles of the tool you’re using.

- *ClearCase and Perforce have a two-step “label” operation. (“Oops”)*
- *Perforce doesn’t lock a file on “edit”, but at submit time.*
- *Labels are handy.*

When things are “too” hard, ask if it’s you or the tool.

- *If merging changes is a horror show, you’re either using the tool improperly or you’re using VSS.*
- *If restoring from a backup is time-consuming or error-prone (or doesn’t work), change your backup strategy.*
- *Type in change descriptions. Don’t be lazy.*

Pay for a shoulder to cry on

- *Call the Tech Support folks for this product and figure out what their strengths and weaknesses are.*
- *Do this before your big emergency.*