

How to Make Software Projects #Fail

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Agenda

- Speaker Introduction
- Premise: why make projects fail?
- Principles and How-tos
 - Dealing with people
 - Special topic: *Creating User Interfaces*
 - Dealing with your management
- Summary

Speaker Introduction

- 12+ years as a Lotus/Iris/IBM developer (1-2-3, Notes/Domino)
 - Wrote the original LotusScript/Java back-end classes (Notes v4.0)
 - Notes/SAP integration (v7.x, 2006)
- 10 years as an independent consultant/developer/author
 - Frequent speaker at LUGs and Lotusphere
 - Many trade journal articles
 - Expertise in N/D programmability, plugins, J2ee, system integration, messaging, migration, appdev in general

Why Make Projects Fail?

- Repeated success is boring
- Anyone can make projects succeed, it takes real SKILL to make a disaster
- Maybe your company needs a "poison pill" to prevent a hostile takeover...

MISTER DOGBERT WILL DESCRIBE OUR "POISON PILL" STRATEGY FOR PREVENTING AN UNFRIENDLY TAKEOVER.



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IT TURNS OUT THAT NO ONE WANTS TO BUY A CRIMINALLY MISMANAGED QUAGMIRE. SO YOU'RE ALL SET.



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MAYBE NEXT TIME YOU WON'T SKIP THE PRE-MEETING.



Principles

- You are probably a manager
- If you are a developer or admin, you will have to wait for my session at Lotusphere:
 - "How to Make Software Projects #Fail If You Are An Admin or Developer"
- While I have prepared some specific examples, most of the material here is overview
 - We only have 45 minutes...

Some Basic Principles

- Remember that people are basically stupid and lazy. This includes your workers
- You get the behavior you reward!
- All of your workers already hate you, you have nothing to lose by treating them badly
- YOU are the boss! Be authoritative, concepts like "right" and "wrong" are all subjective
 - If anyone disagrees: PUNISH them!
- Your loyalty is to the stockholders, NOT the employees
 - Most of them will be gone soon anyway

How To: Deal With People

- Treat people who work for you the same way you were treated when you were 4 years old.
 - Or, if possible, worse
- Trust nobody to tell you the truth
 - Reciprocate
- Follow up on assigned tasks **OFTEN**
 - Micromanage!!
- When someone shows initiative or independent thinking - **PUNISH** them!

Apply Psychology

- Do not let people become too complacent - they will get lazy
- Chaos is good: make many changes in goals and organization at a rapid rate
- Make sure people are always worried about losing their jobs
 - They will work harder
 - And compete with each other
 - Collaboration sucks!

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Keep Employees Guessing



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Slogan

“The beatings will continue
Until morale improves”

About Slogans

- Slogans are easy
 - Truth is hard
 - Stay with slogans
- Especially use "slogans" that sound like religious cults:
 - Agile
 - Continuous Improvement
 - Extreme Programming
 - Agile

Another Good One

Practice the “4 Unders”:

Understaff

Undervalue

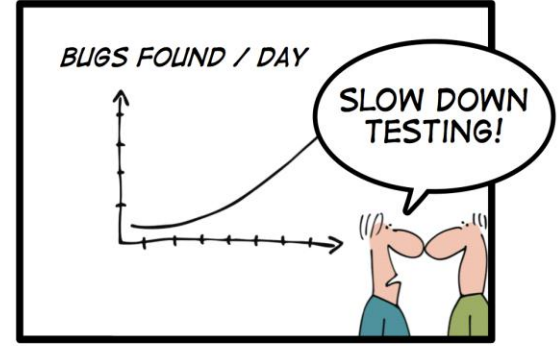
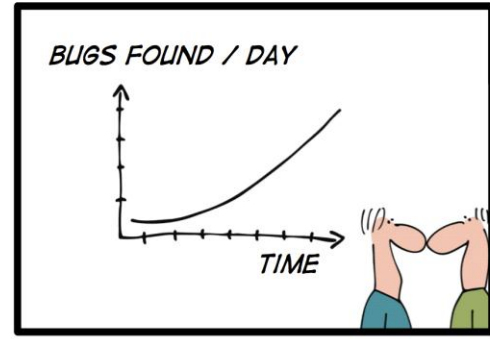
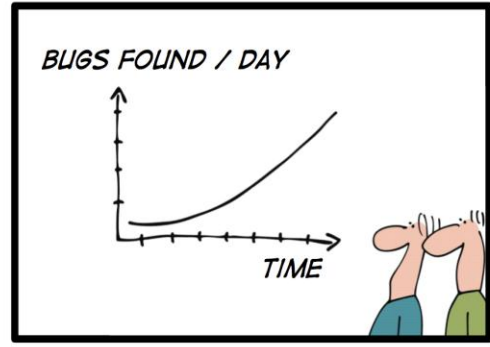
Underestimate

Underfund

Use "Logic"

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/38648591/About-Coders-new-version>

geek & poke



It Is a Manager's Job to Bring in New "Ideas"

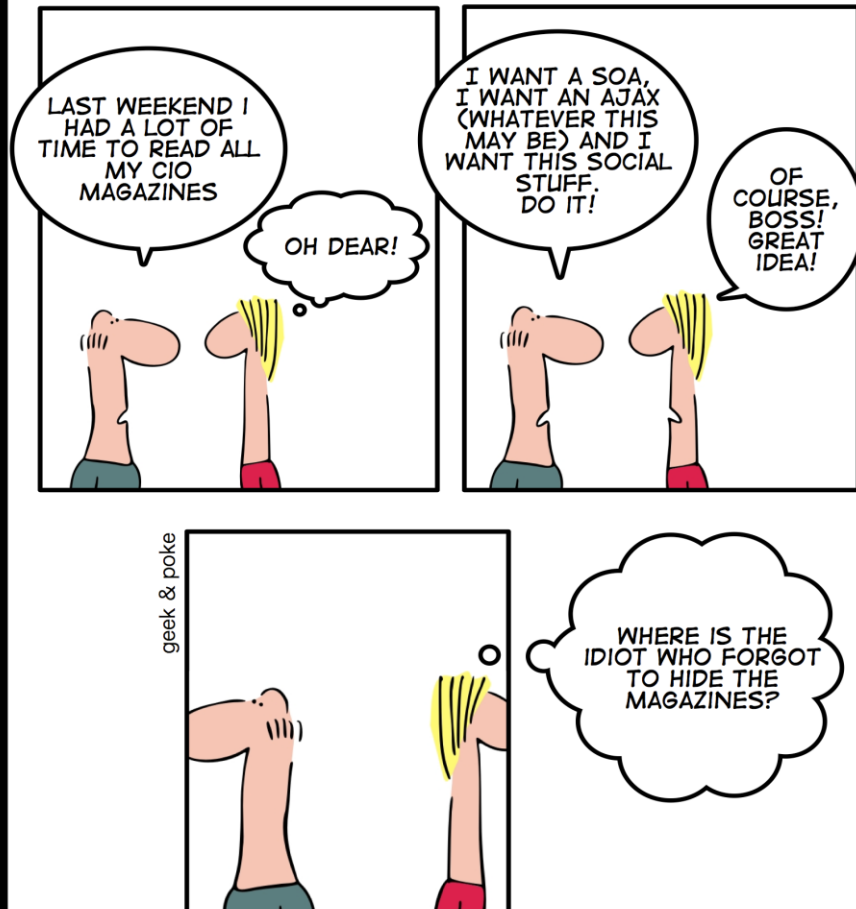
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<http://www.scribd.com/doc/38648591/About-Coders-new-version>

Tip for coders:
Don't let your boss read magazines

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Based on a blog post from Paul Murphy:
<http://www.zdnet.com/blog/murphy/to-form-an-us/1054>

More Management Tips

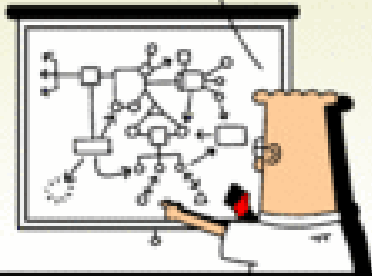
- “Divide and Conquer” is good management technique:
 - Hire lots of contractors, pay them MORE than you pay employees
 - Terminate the contracts when final QA starts
 - Don't invite contractors to any project parties
 - Treat developers better than QA and Doc people - tell them they are more important

More Management Tips

- Chaos is your friend
 - It keeps people on their toes
- Change requirements often
- Fire a couple of people at random
- Complexify!
- Change deadlines (make them SOONER)
- Embrace the "Power of NO"

Cause Chaos

OUR PROJECT PLAN
IS SO COMPLICATED
THAT FAILURE IS
ASSURED.



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BUT COMPLEXITY IS
TOO ABSTRACT FOR
YOU TO MANAGE, SO
INSTEAD YOU WILL
SPRAY MY ENERGY
INTO THE VORTEX
OF FAILURE.



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GO.

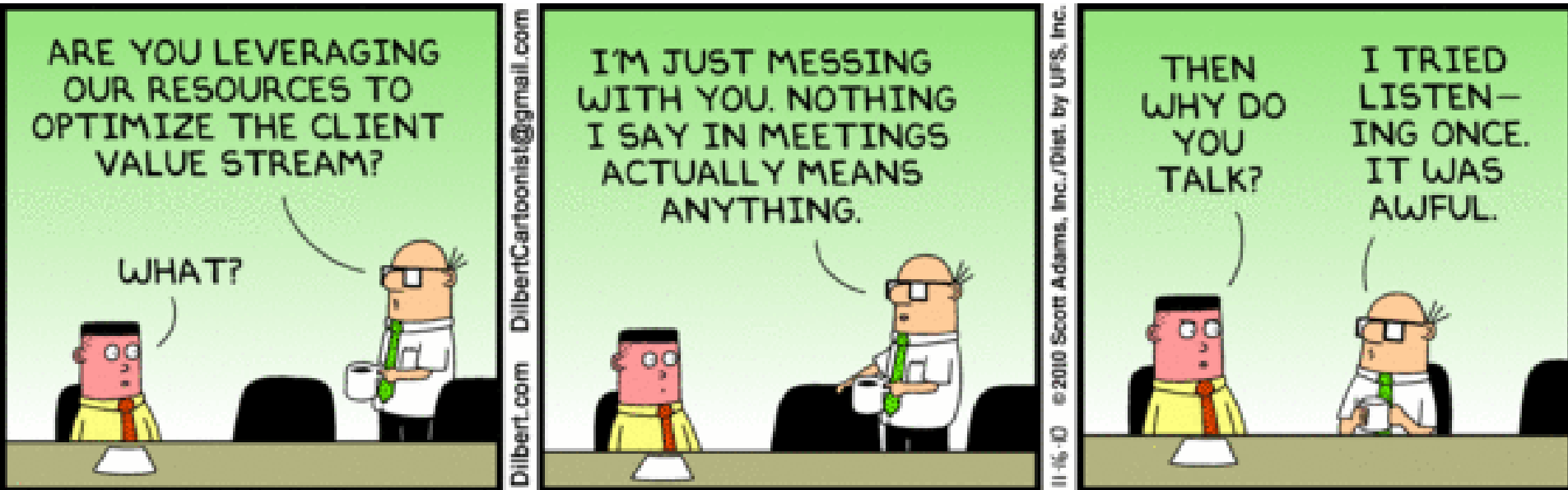


I NEED YOU TO
FINISH IT SIX
WEEKS SOONER
FOR A TRADE
SHOW.



Score!

Have Lots of Meetings



It's more important to have meetings than it is to have content in the meetings

Special Topic: Creating UIs

Special topic: Creating User Interfaces

- UI can be a “black hole” of effort
 - If you approach it carefully!
- 2 things you should realize:
 - 1) UI is the **MOST IMPORTANT** part of an app (everyone uses it)
 - 2) UI is the **LEAST IMPORTANT** part of an app (the functionality matters much more!)
- Use this “creative tension” to your advantage!

UI Techniques You Can Use

- Slogan 1: "UI's come, UI's go, it's the functionality that's important"
- Slogan 2: "The functionality is nothing without UI! UI sells the app"
- Tips:
 - Give a VP frequent UI briefings
 - Implement ALL of his/her "suggestions"
 - Give EVERYONE who gets a UI demo voting rights on design

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More UI Design Tips

- Change the functionality every few days
- Tell people "Maybe you should just copy Google Wave"
- Talk about how the UI should be usable by your mother or father
- Reward people who propose radical new UIs
- If someone complains: PUNISH them!
- VERY important:
 - NEVER do usability testing. Users never know what they want anyway
- Have the developers design the UI. Tell them that users like lots of colors

Still More UI Tips

- Have frequent “UI Design Review” meetings
- Demand trivial changes
- Next meeting, demand changes that revert the design to the previous iteration
 - If someone points this out: PUNISH them!

Dealing With Your Management

- Use the word "strategic" a lot
- Blame everything on your employees:
 - They are lazy
 - They are stupid
 - They are overpaid
 - You need more contractors
 - You plan to save money by having the developers do all the testing

Dealing With Management - 2

- Remember: You are in **COMPETITION** for resources (and your job) with all the other projects in the company
- Therefore you need to consume as many "resources" as possible
- Create dependencies on other departments, then you can blame them
- Save money by canceling all beer

Dealing With Management - 3

- Spew out pathetic phrases:
 - We work smarter AND harder
 - We do more with less
- When management ask for features say,
 - "That's on the stretch list"
 - Make sure many critical features are on the stretch list
 - Make sure the stretch list is never implemented
- Save money by firing Doc people, implement a wiki instead

Summary

- Ensuring that a software project turns into a spectacular disaster is hard
- But you can do it if you pay attention to the details!
- "Reach for the #FAIL"
- Remember: It's not about "success", it's about maximizing your personal power!
 - Use #FAIL to increase your influence!

Resources

- Ben Poole's blog:
 - <http://benpoole.com/weblog/201009060514>
- "About Coders":
 - <http://www.scribd.com/doc/38648591/About-Coders-new-version>
- The "Dilbert Metric"

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