

Ramblings of an IT Project Manager

Or, an interactive Blog

Introductory Question?

To remind ourselves why we
keep suiting up and showing up,

Why do we love working in IT?

10 Things We Love About IT

- 1. The People -- their level of passion**
- 2. The Energy -- excitement about the work**
- 3. The Education Requirement -- Experience counts for a lot**
- 4. The Dress Code -- relaxed**
- 5. The Environment -- informal**
- 6. The Adaptable Learning Curve - constantly changing**

10 Things We Love About IT

7. **Flexible Work Conditions** - relaxed about working hours
8. **Variety in Pacing** - intensity is cyclical
9. **Geography** - There are good IT jobs in every city everywhere.
10. **Pay Day** - The money is good, especially based on the education requirement.

"Computing has been very, very good to me."

America's Toughest Jobs

Jobs highlighted on TV are rough and flashy for good television. It is well paid and a "desk" job. I think that IT deserves a place on this list.

What sucks about working in IT?

What Makes IT a Tough Job?

- 1. You get a lot of fingers pointed at you.**
- 2. Rarely get appreciation for the other 99% of the time.**
- 3. People assume that you are an expert in everything tech.**
- 4. You have to continually retrain, on your own dime.**
- 5. The hours are long and irregular.**
- 6. The job market is tumultuous and in transition.**

What Makes IT a Tough Job?

- 7. There is often a bad inheritance**
 - "Sins of our Fathers"
- 8. You Have to Repeatedly Prove Yourself**
 - You are as good as your last project
 - Just one big instance of "down time"
- 9. You can work yourself out of a job**
 - Streamlining business processes, and then ...
- 10. It's tough to find good help**
- 11. Users confuse IT with magic.**

Introductory Question?

Is it more important for a project manager to have good people skills, PM process skills, or be a subject matter expert? Pick one.

Question Summary

The perfect project manager will obviously have all three.

However, consider this ranking

- 1. PM Process Skills**
- 2. People Skills**
- 3. Business/Technology Skills**

Consider These Thoughts

1. **Main resp. of PM is to manage the process, getting others to do the work.**
2. **Role is project definition, scope, work plan creation and management, communications, risks, issues, ...**
3. **Weak business/technology skills**
 - That's what SMEs are for
 - PM must be a "quick study"
4. **Weak people skills**
 - Good change mgt. can be motivational
 - A good project plan can be motivational
 - Working on time and on budget is motivational
5. **Good people skills but poor process schedules**
 - Nice guy that doesn't know what he is doing!
 - Nice guys finish last
6. **Good business/technology skills but poor PM process skills**
 - We make this mistake all of the time
 - Being a good technologist doesn't usually translate
 - Need training and mentoring

Another Question

**Is a Project Manager
(or any leader) born or
made?**

Born vs. Made

- **There is a difference of opinion.**
- **Researchers have found that you cannot explain leadership based on intelligence, charisma, birth order, family wealth, stability, level of education, ethnicity, race, or gender.**
- **Born – leadership is a talent like musical ability or athleticism.**
- **Made – If you present a compelling enough challenge, ...**
- **Leadership is a mindset, it is an attitude, and it is a belief. It is a way in which we influence and act with one another.**

How to Prepare to be a Leader

- 1. Take more responsibility or ownership of something**
- 2. Sometimes thrust upon you -- accept it.**
- 3. Know your organization.**
- 4. Don't be a wallflower. Make your presence known.**
- 5. Be easy to work with. Don't be a drama ...**
- 6. Act like a leader. Volunteer for stuff.**
- 7. Dress for success. Look the part.**
- 8. Be self assured. Must believe in yourself.**
- 9. Don't slander your coworkers.**
- 10. Look for messes to be cleaned up. Every failure is an opportunity.**

And, What About Your Bosses?

**Did you ever ask the
question, "How did he/she
ever get this job?"**

How did you answer it?

An Interview Question

Would you describe the worst boss you ever worked for?

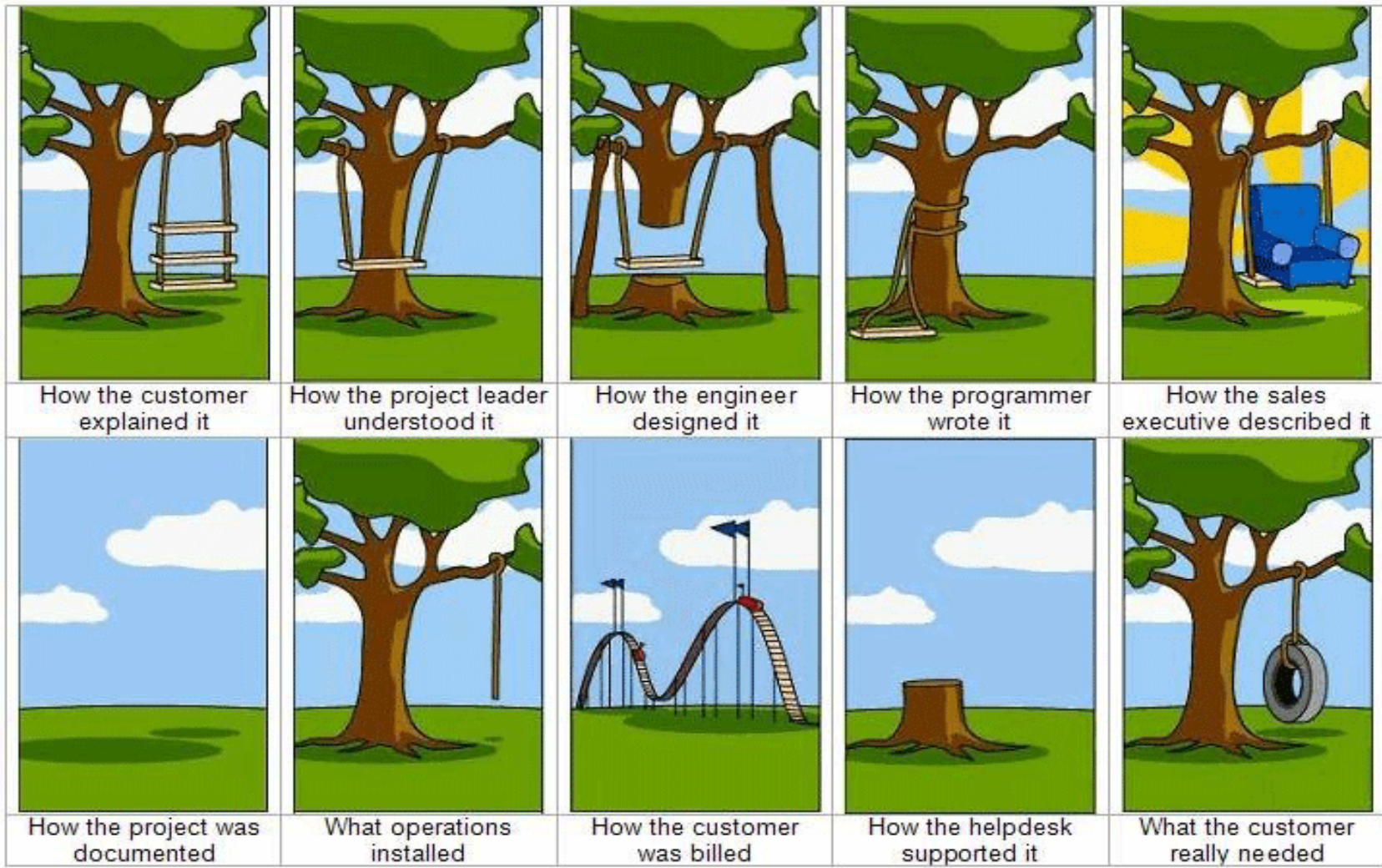
The PC Answer: Every boss that I have had was very good and supportive. I learned a great deal from each of them. However, each had some "blind spots" and I learned from them as well. Then fill in a few specifics.

Some Reasons for Bad Managers

- **Promotion by Attrition**
- **Seniority -- "Pay Their Dues"**
 - Much institutional knowledge
 - Maturity with age
 - Have they kept up with the latest developments?
 - Vs. Young, Dynamic, Bright, Latest Thinking?
- **Politics -- Appoint where they are comfortable**
- **Nepotism (or an Incestuous Organization-all are friends)**
- **Person who wants it the most**
- **"Equal Opportunity"**
- **If one is around long enough and difficult to deal with, ...**
- **Interview well, but no substance.**
- **Marry the Boss's Daughter (Son)!**
- **"Has Pictures"!**

What do the Requirements Specify?

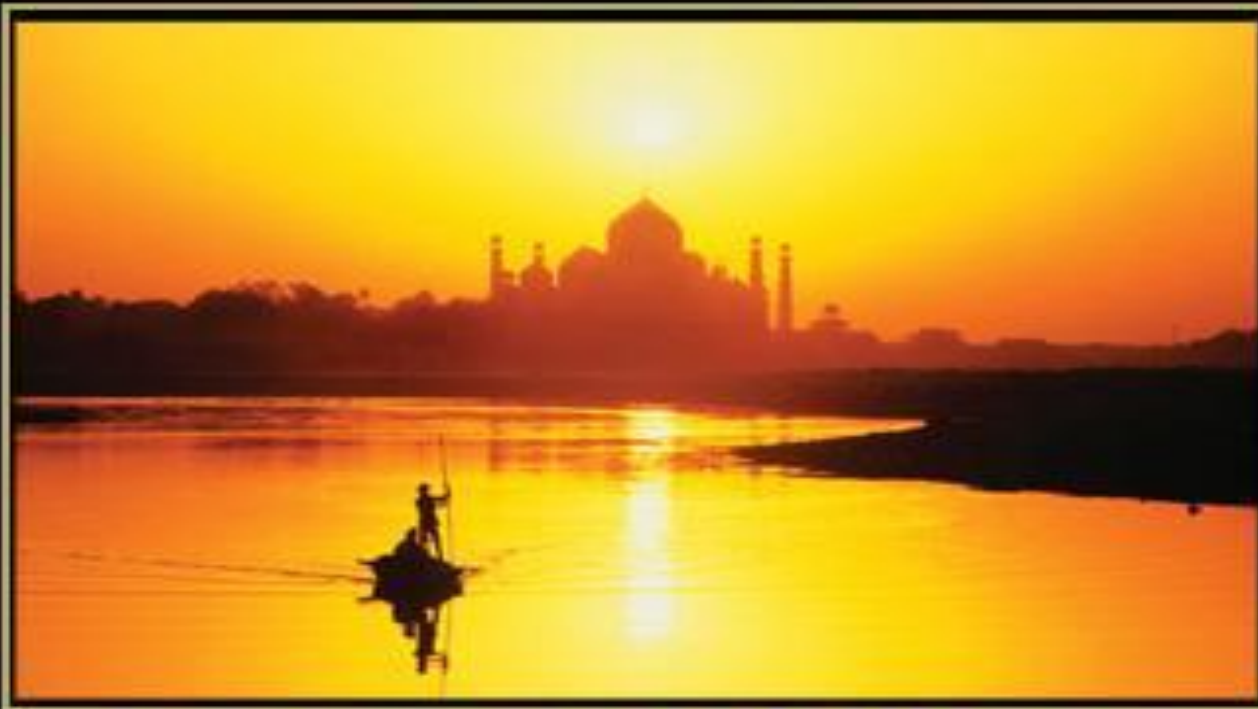
LET'S MAKE SURE.



Another Question

How should I staff my project, with full-time or contract employees?

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Options

- Use existing employees
- Hire new employees
- Use Contract Resources
- Outsource portions of the project

Things to Consider

- **Urgency -- Contractors can be obtained very quickly**
- **Length of the Need -- Short, finite durations -- contractors again**
- **Strategic vs. Non-Strategic Work**
- **Skills and Knowledge Needed**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Cost -- Short term vs. long term issues**
- **Risk**

Your Own Comments & Questions

LET'S MAKE SURE.