

No More Overtime

(or, How To Train Your Manager)

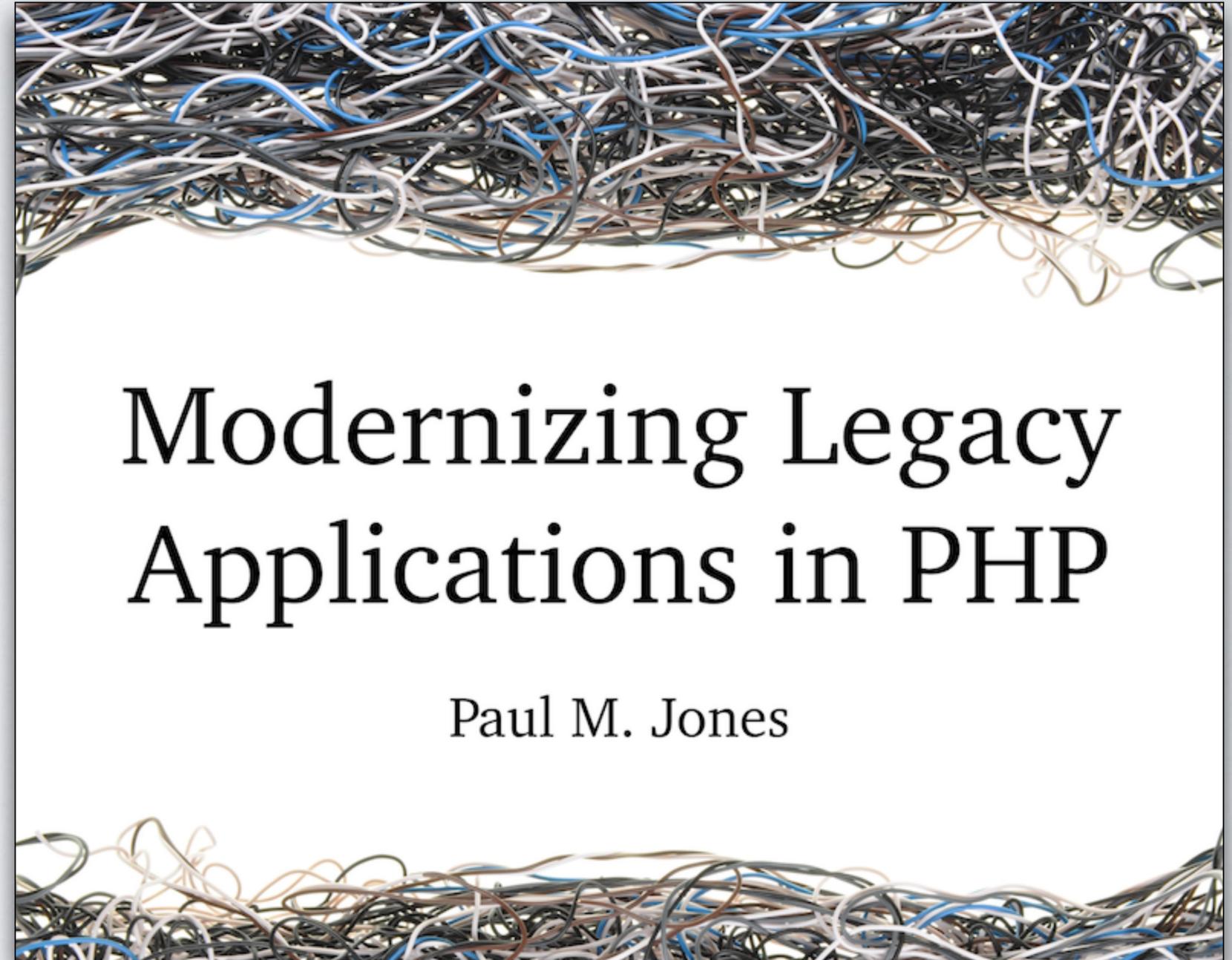
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About Me

- 8 years USAF Intelligence
- BASIC in 1983, PHP since 1999
- Jr. Developer, VP Engineering
- Aura, Radar, Relay, Arbiter
- PHP-FIG: PSR-1, PSR-2, PSR-4
- mla.php.com



All You Jokers?

- Abstract required very early
- Original subject:
us as developers
- Classic definition of "insanity"



The Joke's On Us

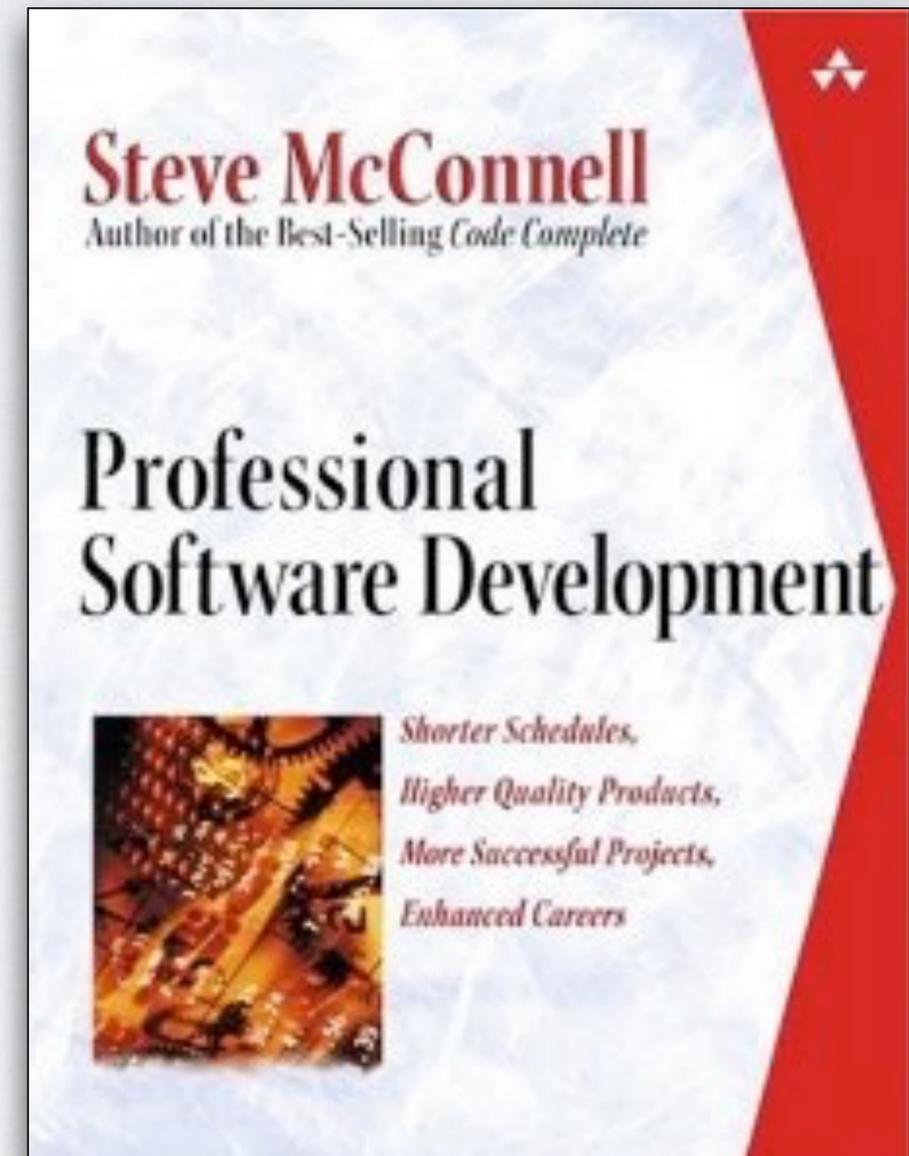
- Real subject: organizations
- Organizational behaviors
- Typical developer responses to organizational influences
- Arm you with tools to recognize and deal with these behaviors



Organizational Structures

Two Ideal Forms

- Commitment-oriented organization
- Process-oriented organization
- Both are good when used properly
- Third form, "cargo cult organization"



Commitment-Oriented

- AKA "hero," "rock star," or "individual empowerment"
- Best possible people
- Near-complete autonomy
- Wide decision-making authority
- Voluntary, personal commitments
- Highly motivated
- 60+ hour weeks
- Reap rewards/failure directly

Microsoft, Google, agile startup

Process-Oriented

- Planning, specifications
- Software best practices
- Regular and methodical
- Standardized processes
- Continuous improvement
- Administrative, bureaucratic
- Documentation-heavy
- Meeting-heavy
- Attention to timing and schedule
- 40-hour work week

NASA, IBM, medical

Cargo Cult Mix

- Little autonomy or authority, but need "commitment"
- Schedule pressure; long hours to cover missed estimates
- Top-down until schedule slips, then heroes needed
- Documentation- and meeting-heavy
- No way to exceed expectations
- Few rewards other than "thanks"
- Repeated over and over and over

Why Do This?

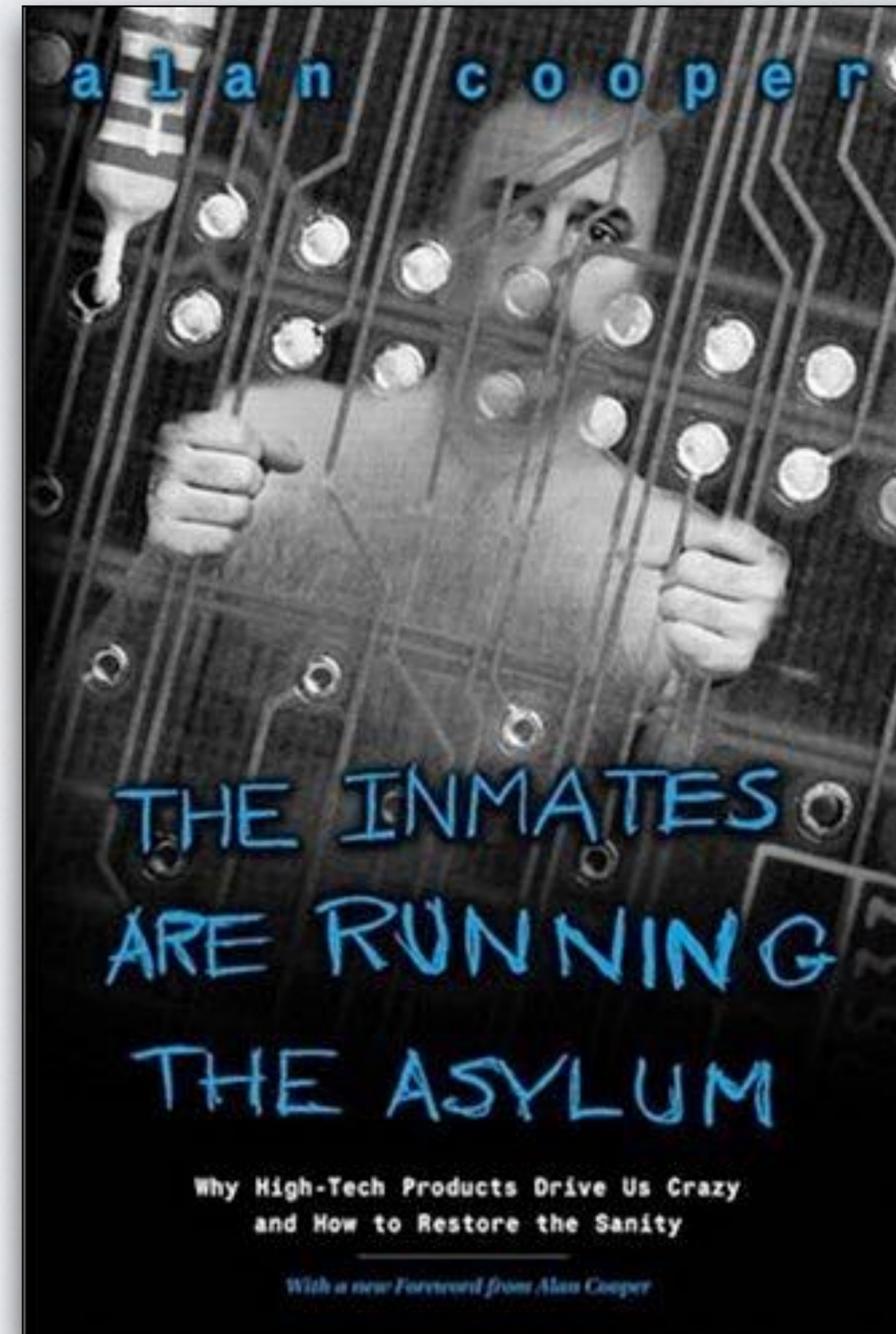
- Use appealing elements of each different ideal form
- Justify with "IBM does this" or "Microsoft does that"
- Failure to realize that elements are part of a system
- Each system has tradeoffs/feedback loops of its own
- Normal human behavior, but destructive

Power Imbalance

- Decision-makers get all upside and no downside (early project vs late)
- Bad schedule decisions? Obtain "commitment" to "do what's needed"
- Failure rested on backs of those who did not make the decisions
- Never learn; insulated from failure
- No incentive to change
- Trying to get stuff for free: commitment without authority
- You suffer through

Why No Changes?

- We talk about technology, algorithms, patterns, practices ...
- ... but not about social, managerial, organizational aspects.

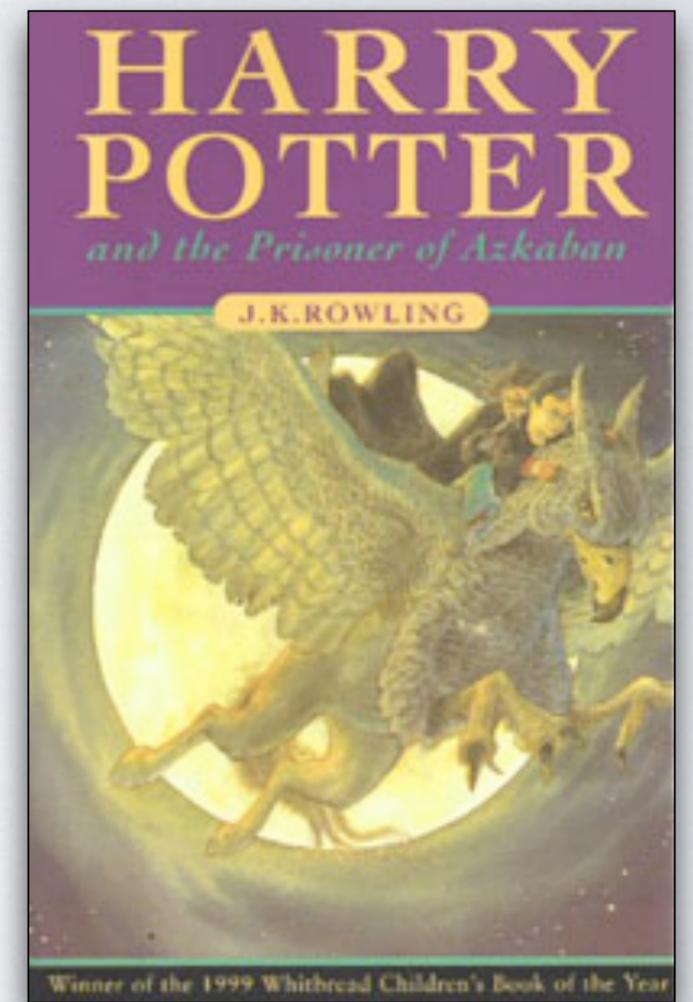
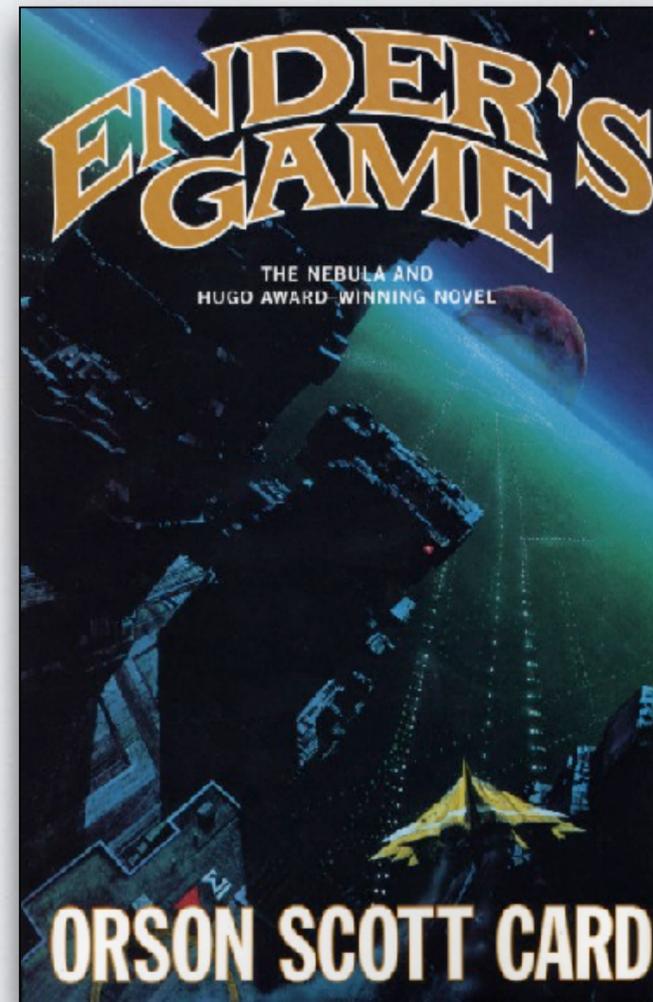


It Keeps Happening

- "If I do it one more time, I'll be rewarded" (aka "This time will be different")
- Using your good will against you
- Abusive relationship ("It's not that bad")
- Dump and find another just like the old one
- You train others how to treat you

Options

- Why should I do the work?
Let the organization change!
- Nobody is coming to save you
- Change your own responses
- Re-train others to treat you differently



The Work Of Change

Rethink Your Relationship

- Not going to be there for 20 years (5?)
- Only two exits: quit/resign, fired/laid off
- No need to suffer through bad treatment

Objections

- "I like to do the work."
- "I want to be seen as loyal."
- "They have the money."
- "I have to do what they say."
- "I need this job."
- "I have no power in the relationship."

Power Of Your Own

Engineers have the power to create and sustain.

Non-engineers can order people around, but in a typical software company [they] can create nothing on their own, and only have the power that engineers grant them.

They can create and sustain nothing without engineers.

-- "How To Be A Programmer,"
R. L. Read

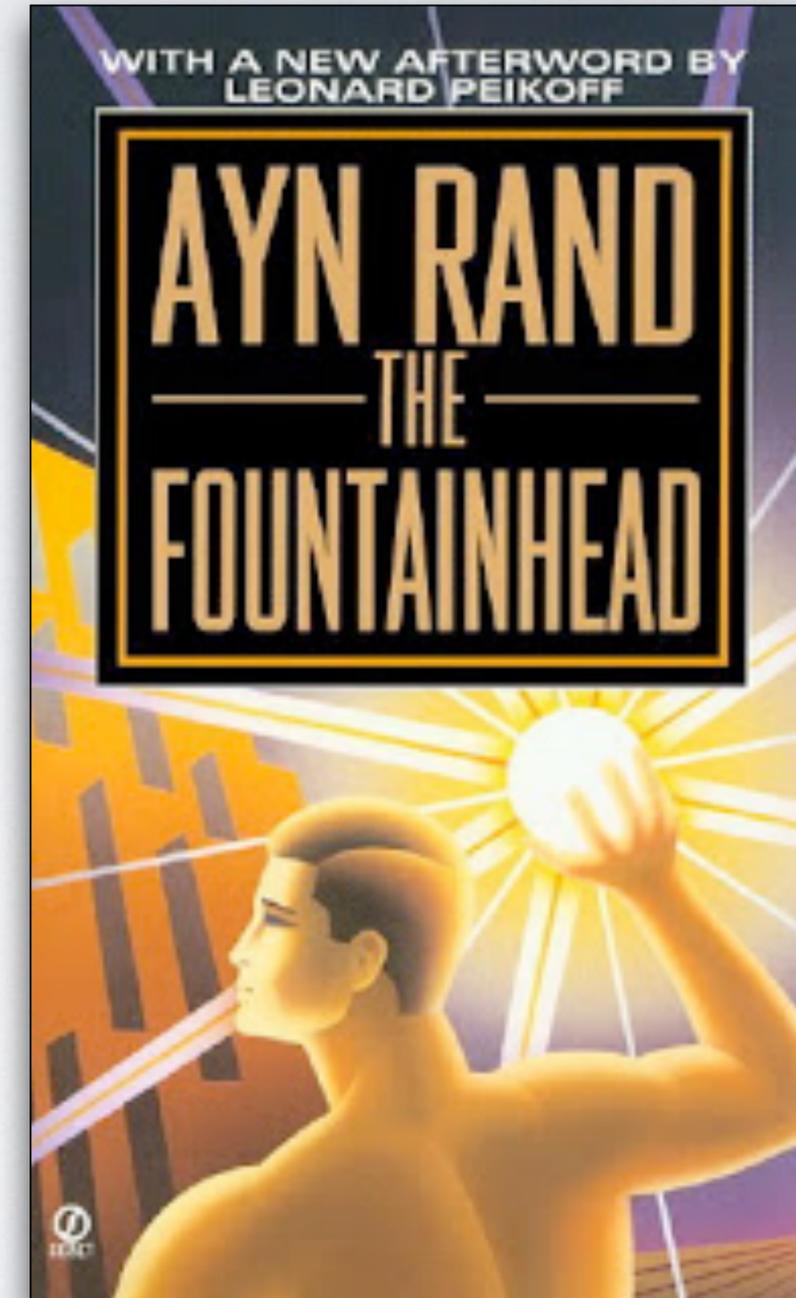


Recalibrate

- Not "disloyal" or "uncommitted"
- Calibrate your attitude/expectations/responses appropriately
- What will happen in response?
- Begin to deflect inappropriate demands
- Re-train others on how to treat you

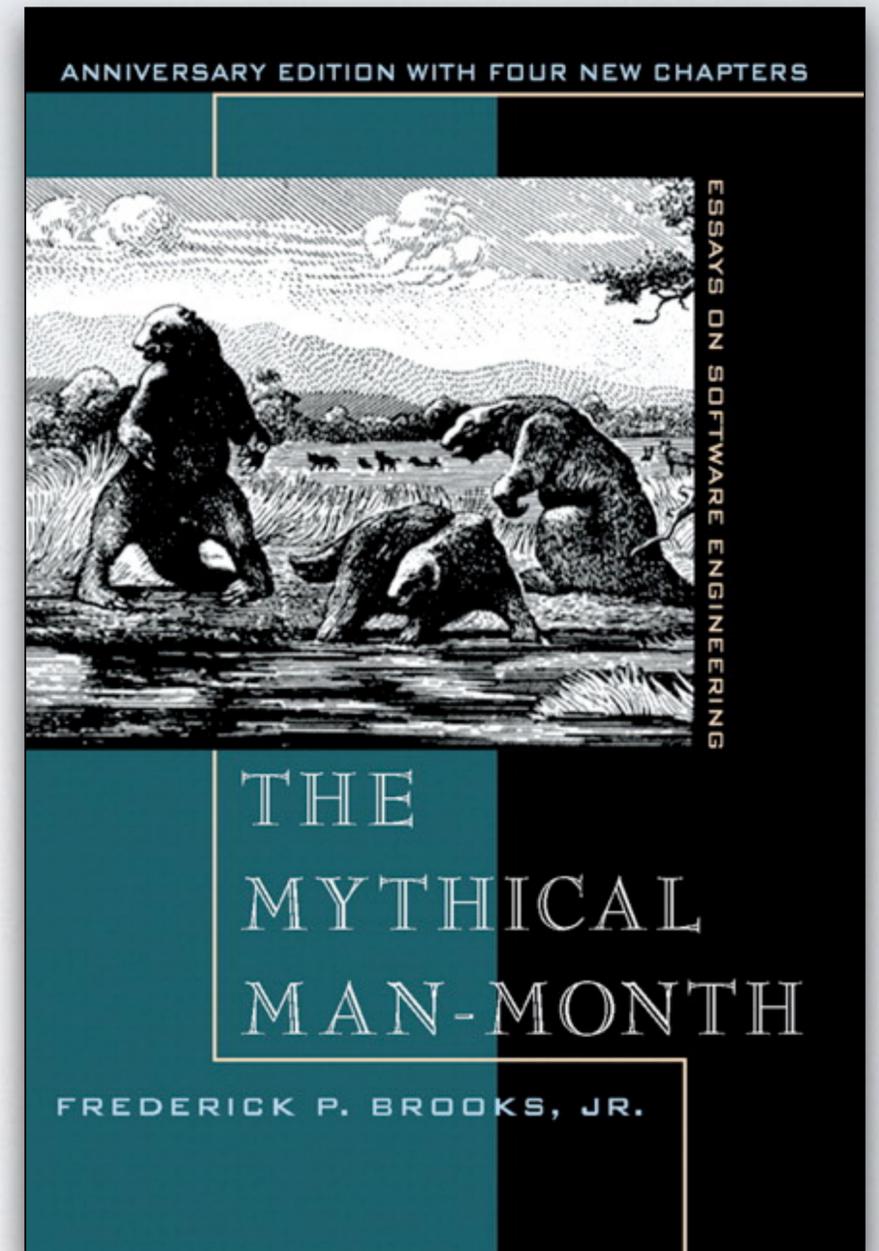
Cultivate A New Attitude

- "I might need a job ... but I don't need this job."
- Once you truly have this attitude, you become free to exercise your power.
- Actions come from a place of strength instead of weakness.



Example: Overtime

- Schedule pressure very common
- Decision-maker dictated the schedule
- Time is tight, not enough scope reduction
- "We need everyone to do what's necessary to make this project succeed for the company."
- "Everyone" == "developers" (and QA)



Response From Weakness

- "OK boss."
- Nights and weekends
- Missed personal/family time
- No commensurate reward
- Impose on your team
- Organization never changes

Response From Strength (I)

- Calibrate properly
- Asking is different than demanding
- "Emergency" or "predictable"?
- Point out the problem was predictable
- "Who decided on this schedule?"
- "Who else is working overtime?"
- What's the worst that can happen?

Response From Strength (2)

- "I have other commitments."
- "What should I stop doing to do this instead?"
- "I'll do what I can, but I can't make any promises."
- "When should I take the overtime as days off?"
- "Can do."

Response From Strength (3)

- Cultivate and honor these responses from your team members
- Send them home at the end of the day
- Your job is both to lead and to defend
- Point out mismatches from the Ideal Forms
(e.g., demanding long hours but not granting commensurate authority)

Consequences (I)

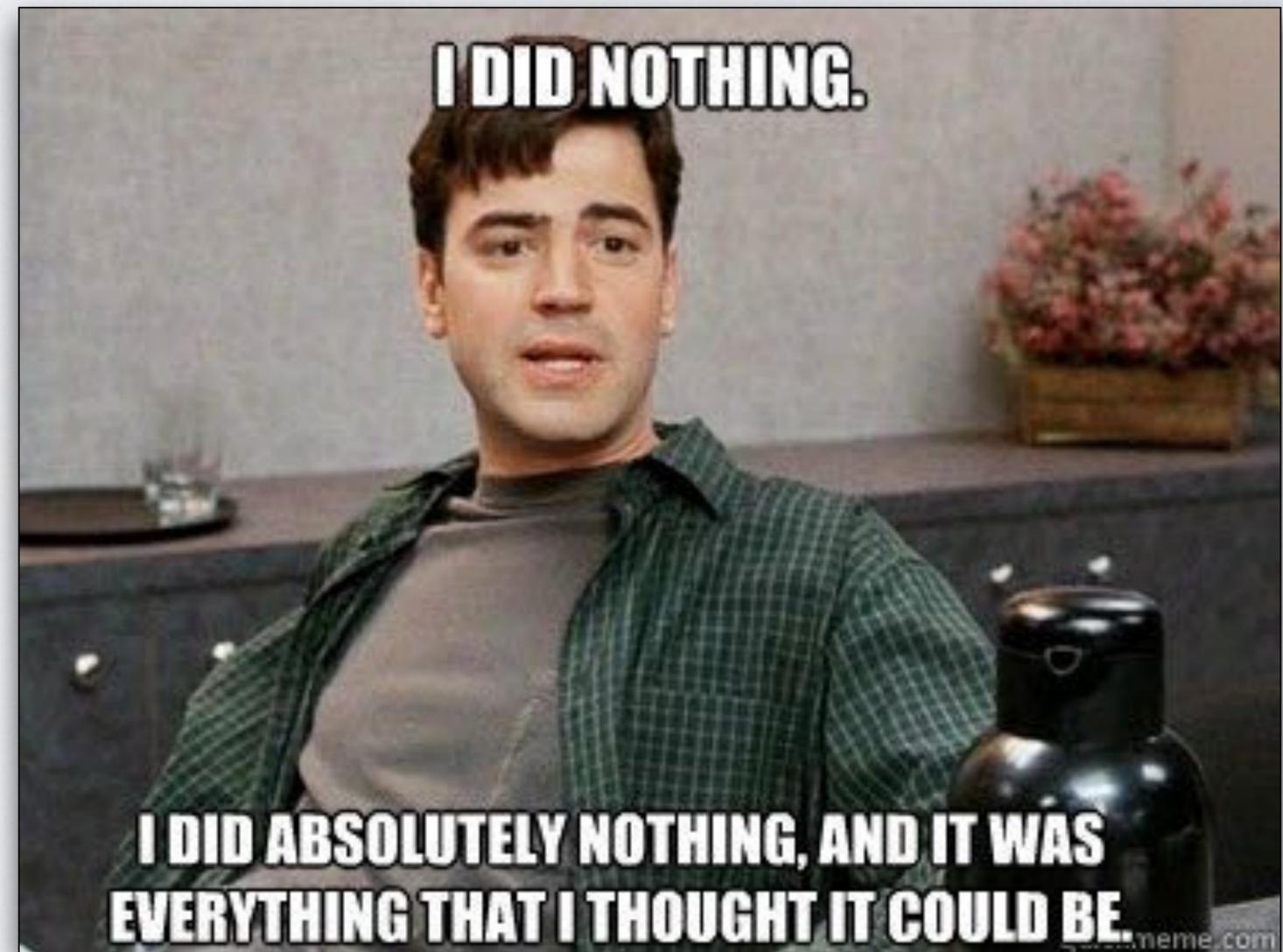
- Resentment (employer and employee)
- Bad reviews, lower raises, lower bonuses
- Pressure to commit under duress

Consequences (2)

- Fired
- Result of changing attitude after being hired
- Start new employer in strength

Consequences (3)

- "Office Space" scenario
- "Consultant" scenario
- Change organizational behavior (feeling effects of poor decisions)
- Confidence and respect



With Great Power...

Exercising Your Power

- You already have it
- Savings and no debt
- Build respect and trust



Constraints To Power

- Use for good or evil
- Honest, faithful, true
- Integrity and responsibility



Don't Get Defensive

- No whining, no indignation, no extended explanation, no ultimatums
- Maintain dignity, maintain frame
- Just start looking for other work



Disagree Agreeably

- Team cohesion is still important
- State your position so you know they understand what you mean
- If others do not agree, let them disagree
- Go along with the consensus plan but note your disagreement
- If you end up being right, be kind but direct about it

Don't Be A Bully

- Physically powerful people usually learn that physical intimidation is not socially acceptable
- Mentally powerful people rarely learn that mental intimidation is not socially acceptable
- You are a social animal
- Do not burn your social bridges



Conclusion

- Commitment, process, and "cargo cult"
- Recognize and exercise your own power
- Act from strength, not weakness
- Do so responsibly, with integrity
- Not trying to make you a monster
- Trying to put you ahead of the curve

Thanks!

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