

Fall and Rise of the Geeks

A semi-fictional trilogy with an abundance of cloudy analogies, misunderstandings, and exaggerations. (Also, it takes place in space.) Any resemblance with real names and places might be coincidental.

Part I: An apocalyptic hors-d'œuvre

In a galaxy far, far away, a software company called Weedsoft huffed and puffed and snorted its delusional way towards the bursting of a magic dragon called the *Dot-com bubble*. At the time, Weedsoft was very busy expanding the ranks of unfathomable talent, and when the giant financial zit on the face of modern economy slowly erupted, it hurt like hell. So, when the white dust¹ of Weedsoft's recently employed (and recently fired) IT rookies had settled, management knew that another disaster like this was to be avoided at all costs. In unison, they screamed one word, and they shouted it out loud²: "**Control!**" Said and done. In the years to come, programmer teams that had previously been left alone to do whatever it was they did (presumably something very object-oriented, über-generic, technical, and seldom with any real customer value) were kept on a short leash. Detailed and super-specific tasks were assigned to each and every person, with strict orders to not do anything else. Soon, everyone worked silently and inefficiently behind closed doors in their nice little offices, and communication was one-directional and non-verbal (because if something wasn't documented, it didn't exist). Responsibility was shunned, and the cholesterol-ish sword of lost creativity was buried deep in the flubbery³ white flesh of middle-aged humanoids with exponentially decaying⁴ motivation and unhealthy Internet habits⁵. Results were far beyond disappointing. In fact, results were simply absent, since no new software releases were ever quite finished (but hey, just wait one more month!). This way of conducting business was a *management failure* of monumental proportions. Meanwhile, individuals bent over backwards to stay out of managers' ways, chanting their weekly "I'm almost done; it will only take one more week to finish". This was a *professional failure* of monumental proportions.

Given the aforementioned (monumentally sad) state of affairs, it would seem that Weedsoft – just like so many others in the software industry – was heading for certain disaster. However, islands of productivity remained in the polluted outskirts of this slow mammoth of an organization. Also, sales of the old crap already developed were somehow going strong⁶.

Most importantly, below the oily surface of programmer apathy engineering *pride* and *ambition* were stirring, slowly making their way back towards the light. All hope was not lost.

Don't miss the dramatic revelation of Weedsoft's salvation in "**Part II: Unzipping the fanny packs**".

¹ Contrary to these hallucinogenic implications, I do not advocate the use of illegal substances.

² Gene Simmons, you rock. Paul Stanley, you do too. Lick it up.

³ You'll want to watch the movie *Flubber* (Disney Pictures, 1997) to fully understand this reference.

⁴ $Motivation(t) = Motivation_0 e^{-\lambda t}$ (where $Motivation_0$ is the quantity of motivation at time $t=0$).

⁵ Surfing for porn, no doubt.

⁶ If they hadn't, this would not be a trilogy but an, ahem, unilogy. Lucky you.