

What Makes Code “Legacy” and How Can Agile Help? (ESaaS § 9.1)

Armando Fox

Legacy Code Matters

- Since maintenance consumes ~60% of software costs, *it is probably the most important life cycle phase of software . . .*

“Old hardware becomes obsolete;
old software goes into production every
night.”

Robert Glass, *Facts & Fallacies of Software Engineering*
(fact #41)

*How do we understand and **safely** modify
legacy code?*

Maintenance != bug fixes

- Enhancements: 60% of maintenance costs
- Bug fixes: 17% of maintenance costs

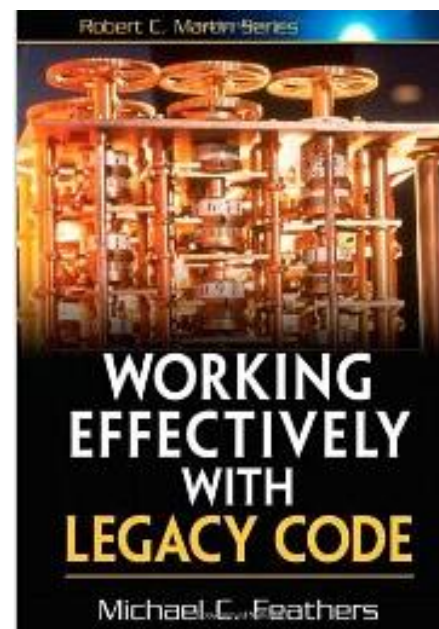
Hence the “60/60 rule”:

- 60% of software cost is maintenance
- 60% of maintenance cost is enhancements.

Glass, R. *Software Conflict*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Yourdon Press, 1991

What makes code “legacy”?

- Still meets customer need, **AND:**
- You didn't write it, and it's poorly documented
- You did write it, but a long time ago (and it's poorly documented)
- *It lacks good tests (regardless of who wrote it)*—Feathers 2004



2 ways to think about modifying legacy code

- Edit & Pray
 - “I kind of think I probably didn’t break anything”



- Cover & Modify
 - Let *test coverage* be your safety blanket



How Agile Can Help



1. **Exploration:** determine where you need to make changes (*change points*)
2. **Refactoring:** is the code around change points (a) tested? (b) testable?
 - (a) is true: good to go
 - $!(a) \ \&\& \ (b)$: apply BDD+TDD cycles to improve test coverage
 - $!(a) \ \&\& \ !(b)$: **refactor**

How Agile Can Help, cont.

3. Add tests to **improve coverage** as needed
4. **Make changes**, using tests as *ground truth*
5. **Refactor** further, to leave codebase better than you found it

- This is “embracing change” on long time scales

“Try to leave this world a little better than you found it.”

Lord Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts

If you've been assigned to modify legacy code, which statement would make you happiest if true?

- ☐ “It was originally developed using Agile techniques”
- ☐ “It is well covered by tests”
- ☐ “It's nicely structured and easy to read”
- ☐ “Many of the original design documents are available”

cut



Approaching & Exploring Legacy Code (*ESaaS § 9.2*)

Armando Fox

Interlude/Armando's Computer History Minute

- Always mount a scratch monkey



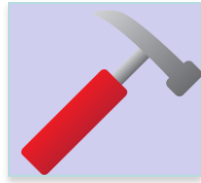
- More folklore: <http://catb.org/jargon>

Get the code running in development

- Check out a *scratch branch* that won't be checked back in, and get it to run
 - In a production-like setting or development-like setting
 - Ideally with something resembling a **copy** of production database
 - Some systems may be too large to clone
- Learn the user stories: Get customer to talk you through what they're doing

Understand database schema & important classes

- Inspect database schema
(`rake db:schema:dump`)
- Create a [model interaction diagram](#)
automatically (`gem install railroady`) or
manually by code inspection
- What are the main (highly-connected)
classes, their *responsibilities*, and their
collaborators?





Class-Responsibility-Collaborator (CRC) Cards

(Kent Beck & Ward Cunningham, OOPSLA 1989)

Showing			
Responsibilities	Collaborators		
Knows name of movie	Movie		
Knows date & time			
Computes ticket availability	Ticket		
		Ticket	
		Responsibilities	Collaborators
		Knows its price	
		Knows which showing it's for	Showing
		Computes ticket availability	
		Knows its owner	Patron
Order			
Responsibilities	Collaborators		
Knows how many tickets it has	Ticket		
Computes its price			
Knows its owner	Patron		
Knows its owner	Patron		

CRC' s and User Stories

Feature: Add movie tickets to shopping cart

As a **patron**

So that I can **attend** a **showing** of a **movie**

I want to **add tickets** to my **order**

Scenario: Find specific showing

Given a showing of "Inception" on Oct 5 at 7pm

When I visit the "Buy Tickets" page

Then the "Movies" menu should contain "Inception"

And the "Showings" menu should contain "Oct 5, 7pm"

Scenario: Find what other showings are available

Given there are showings of "Inception" today at
2pm, 4pm, 7pm, 10pm

When I visit the "List showings" page for "Inception"

Then I should see "2pm" and "4pm" and "7pm" and "10pm"

Codebase & “informal” docs

- Overall codebase *gestalt*
 - Subjective code quality? (**reek**, **flog**, **flay**, **saikuro**)
 - Code to test ratio? Codebase size? (**rake stats**)
 - Major models/views/controllers?
 - Cucumber & Rspec tests
- Informal design docs
 - Lo-fi UI mockups and user stories
 - Archived email, newsgroup, internal wiki pages or blog posts, etc. about the project
 - Design review notes (eg [Campfire](#) or [Basecamp](#))
 - Commit logs in version control system (**git log**)
 - RDoc documentation

Ruby RDoc Example	RDoc Documentation	+
Files	Classes	Methods
date_calculator.rb	DateCalculator	current_year_from_days (DateCalculator) new (DateCalculator)



Class **DateCalculator**

In: date_calculator.rb

Parent: Object

This class calculates the current year given an origin day supplied by a clock chip.

Author: Armando Fox

Copyright: Copyright(C) 2011 by Armando Fox

License: Distributed under the BSD License

Methods

[current_year_from_days](#) [new](#)

Public Class methods

new(*origin_year*)

Create a new DateCalculator initialized to the origin year

- *origin_year* - days will be calculated from Jan. 1 of this year

Public Instance methods

current_year_from_days(*days_since_origin*)

Returns current year, given days since origin year

- *days_since_origin* - number of days elapsed since Jan. 1 of origin year

[\[Validate\]](#)

Summary: Exploration

- “Size up” the overall code base
- Identify key classes and relationships
- Identify most important data structures
- Ideally, identify place(s) where change(s) will be needed
- Keep design docs as you go
 - diagrams
 - GitHub wiki
 - comments you insert using RDoc

“Patrons can make donations as well as buying tickets. For donations we need to track which fund they donate to so we can create reports showing each fund's activity. For tickets, we need to track what show they're for so we can run reports by show, plus other things that don't apply to donations, such as when they expire.”

Which statement is LEAST compelling for this design?

- ☐ Donation has at least 2 collaborator classes.
- ☐ Donations and Tickets should subclass from a common ancestor.
- ☐ Donations and Tickets should implement a common interface such as “Purchasable”.
- ☐ Donations and Tickets should implement a common interface such as “Reportable”.

cut

Identifying What's Wrong: Smells, Metrics, SOFA (ESaaS § 9.4)



<http://pastebin.com/gtQ7QcHu>

Quantitative: Metrics

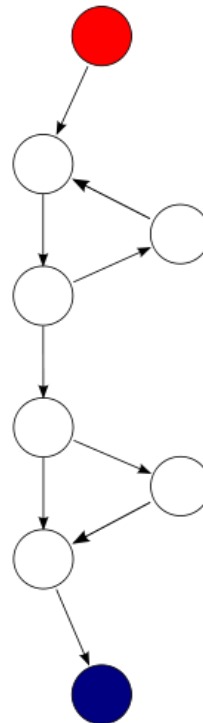
Metric	Tool	Target score
Code-to-test ratio	rake stats	$\leq 1:2$
C0 (statement) coverage	SimpleCov	90%+
Assignment-Branch-Condition score	flog	< 20 per method
Cyclomatic complexity	saikuro	< 10 per method (NIST)

- “Hotspots”: places where *multiple metrics* raise red flags
 - add `require 'metric_fu'` to **Rakefile**
 - **`rake metrics:all`**
- Take metrics with a grain of salt
 - Like coverage, better for *identifying where improvement is needed* than for *signing off*

Cyclomatic complexity (McCabe, 1976)

- # of linearly-independent paths thru code = $E - N + 2P$ (edges, nodes, connected components)

```
def mymeth
  while(...)
    ....
  end
  if (...)
    do_something
  end
end
```



- Here, $E=9$, $N=8$, $P=1$, so $CC=3$
- NIST (Nat'l Inst. Stds. & Tech.): ≤ 10 /module

Qualitative: Code Smells

SOFA captures symptoms that often indicate code smells:

- Be **s**hort
- Do **o**ne thing
- Have **f**ew arguments
- Consistent level of **a**bstraction

Single Level of Abstraction

- Complex tasks need divide & conquer
- Yellow flag for “encapsulate this task in a method”:
 - line N of function says *what to do*
 - but line N+1 says *how to do* something
- Like a good news story, classes & methods should read “top down”!
- Example: encourage customers to opt in

Why Lots of Arguments is Bad

- Hard to get good testing coverage
- Hard to mock/stub while testing
- Boolean arguments should be a yellow flag
 - If function behaves differently based on Boolean argument value, maybe should be 2 functions
- If arguments “travel in a herd”, maybe you need to *extract a new class*
- Example: mailing address for **Moviegoer**

Example: AvailableSeat

- A real example
 - **Shows** have seat inventory for sale, at different prices and for different sections (premium vs. regular, eg)
 - Some seats only available to “VIP” **customers**
 - Some seat **types** only sold during certain **date ranges**, or have **limited inventory**

AvailableSeat	
<i>Responsibilities</i>	<i>Collaborators</i>
Knows rules for computing availability	Showdate Customer ValidVoucher VoucherType
Computes availability of each seat type given show & customer	
Provides explanation when a certain seat type is unavailable	

Which SOFA guideline is most important for unit-level testing?

- ☐ Short
- ☐ Do one thing
- ☐ Have few arguments
- ☐ Stick to one level of abstraction

cut



Intro to Method-Level Refactoring

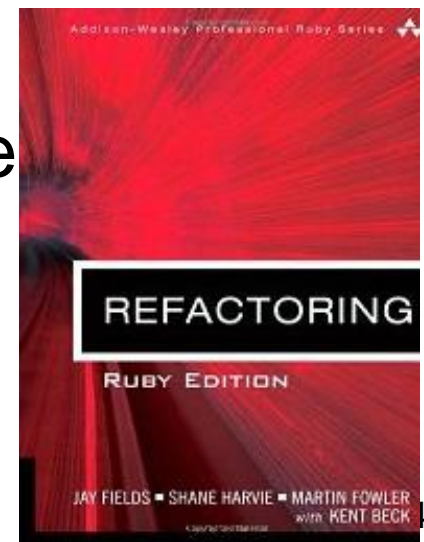
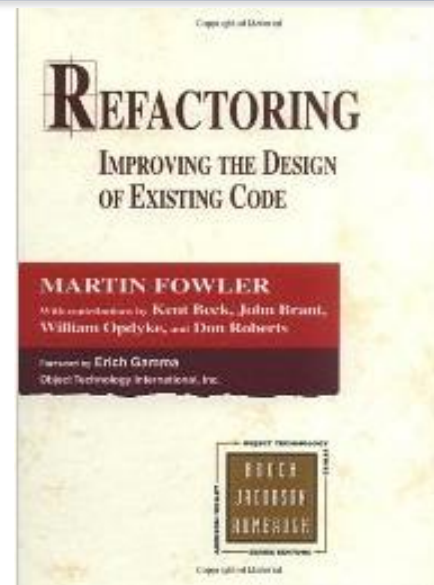
(*ESaaS § 9.5*)

Refactoring: Idea

- Start with code that has 1 or more problems/smells
- Through a series of *small steps*, transform to code from which those smells are absent
- Protect each step with tests
- *Minimize time during which tests are red*

History & Context

- Fowler et al. developed mostly definitive catalog of refactorings
 - Adapted to various languages
 - Method- and class-level refactorings
- Each refactoring consists of:
 - Name
 - Summary of what it does/when to use
 - Motivation (what problem it solves)
 - Mechanics: step-by-step recipe
 - Example(s)





Refactoring TimeSetter

- Fix stupid names <http://pastebin.com/pYCfMQJp>
- Extract method <http://pastebin.com/sXVDW9C6>
- Extract method, encapsulate class <http://pastebin.com/yrmyVd7R>
- Test extracted methods <http://pastebin.com/vNw66mn9>
- Some thoughts on unit testing
 - Glass-box testing can be useful while refactoring
 - Common approach: test *critical values* and *representative noncritical values*

Wrapup of Refactoring example

start

What did we do?

- Made date calculator easier to read and understand using simple *refactorings*
- Found a bug
- Observation: if we had developed method using TDD, might have gone easier!
- Improved our **flog** & **reek** scores

Other Smells & Remedies

Smell	Refactoring that may resolve it
Large class	Extract class, subclass or module
Long method	Decompose conditional Replace loop with collection method Extract method Extract enclosing method with <code>yield()</code> Replace temp variable with query Replace method with object
Long parameter list/data clump	Replace parameter with method call Extract class
Shotgun surgery; Inappropriate intimacy	Move method/move field to collect related items into one DRY place
Too many comments	Extract method introduce assertion replace with internal documentation
Inconsistent level of abstraction	Extract methods & classes

Which is NOT a goal of method-level refactoring?

- ☐ Reduce code complexity
- ☐ Eliminate code smells
- ☐ Eliminate bugs
- ☐ Improve testability

cut



Legacy Code & Refactoring: Reflections, Fallacies, Pitfalls, etc.

(ESaaS § 9.8-9.10)

First Drafts

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for **a people to advance from that subordination in which they have hitherto remained, &** to assume among the powers of the earth the **equal & independent** station to which the Laws of Nature & of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the **change**.

We hold these truths to be **sacred & undeniable**...

First Drafts

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for **one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another**, & to assume among the powers of the earth, the **separate & equal** station to which the Laws of Nature & of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the **separation**.
We hold these truths to be **self-evident**...

Fallacies & Pitfalls

*Most of your design, coding, and testing time
will be spent refactoring.*

- ⚠ “We should just throw this out and start over”
- ⚠ Mixing refactoring with enhancement
- ⚠ Abuse of metrics
- ⚠ Waiting too long to do a “big refactor” (vs. continuous refactoring)

Which is TRUE regarding refactoring?

- ☐ Refactoring usually results in fewer total lines of code
- ☐ Refactoring should not cause existing tests to fail
- ☐ Refactoring addresses explicit (vs. implicit) customer requirements
- ☐ Refactoring often results in changes to the test suite

cut



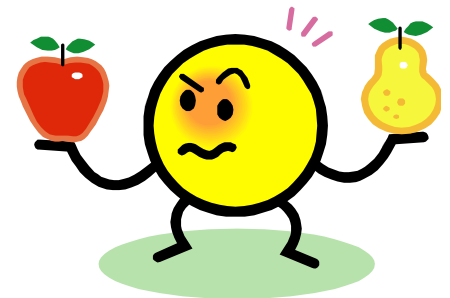
Plan-And-Document Perspective on Software Maintenance:

(Engineering Software as a Service § 9.7)

David Patterson

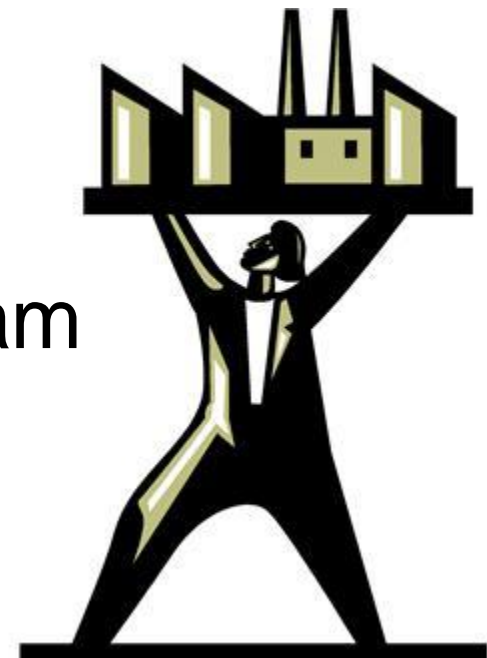
P&D Maintenance?

- How much spent on P&D development vs. P&D maintenance?
 - How does this compare to Agile?
- Agile developers maintain code
 - Does P&D use same or different people for maintenance?
- What does the P&D Maintenance Documentation look like?



P&D Maintenance

- P&D spends 1/3 on development, 2/3 on maintenance
 - Customers pay 10%/year SW maintenance fee
- Development \neq Maintenance Team
 - Maintenance Managers
 - Maintenance SW Engineers
 - Typically less prestigious



Maintenance Manager

- Like Development Manager
 - Estimate costs, maintain schedule, evaluate risks & overcomes them
 - Recruits maintenance team
 - Evaluate software engineers performance, which sets salary
 - Document project maintenance plan (maintain documents & code)
 - IEEE standard to follow
 - Blamed if upgrade takes too long or too expensive



P&D Maintenance Process

- Differences vs. Development Process:

1. Working SW in field

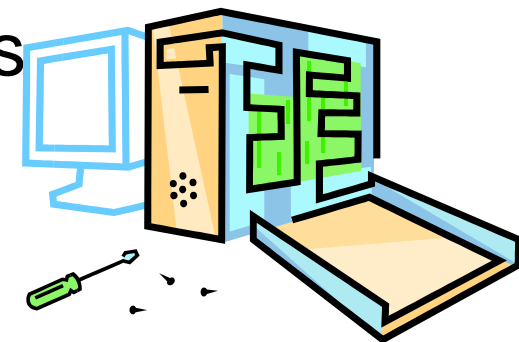
- New releases can't break features

2. Customer collaboration

- Work with customer to improve in next release vs. meet contract spec

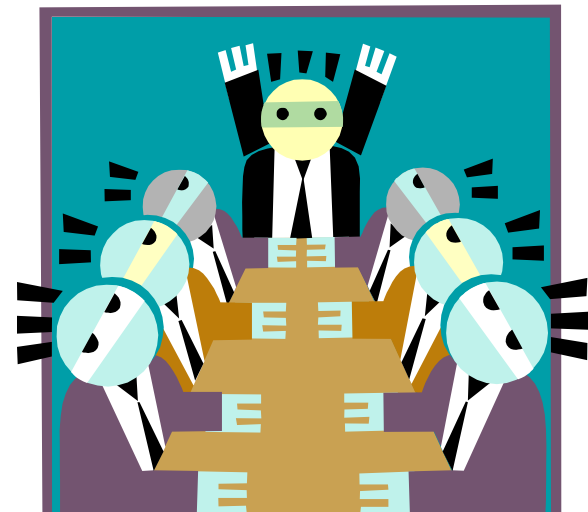
3. Responding to change

- Customers send *change requests*, which SW engineers must prioritize
- *Change request forms* have ticket tracking



Change Control Board

- Board (not Manager) decides
- Manager estimates cost/time per change request
- QA team gives cost of testing for change request, including regression testing + new tests
- Documentation teams gives cost of updating docs
- Customer support group decides if urgent or workaround



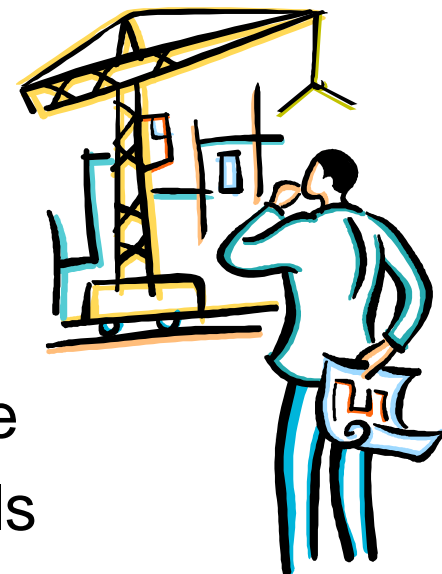
Urgent Change Request

- No time to update docs, plans & code
 - Software product crashes
 - New laws affect product
 - Security hole => data vulnerable
 - New releases of underlying OS/library
 - Must match competitor's new feature
- Synch after emergency?
 - Emergencies too frequent to catch up?
- Time to refactor to improve maintainability
 - Too expensive for Change Control Board?

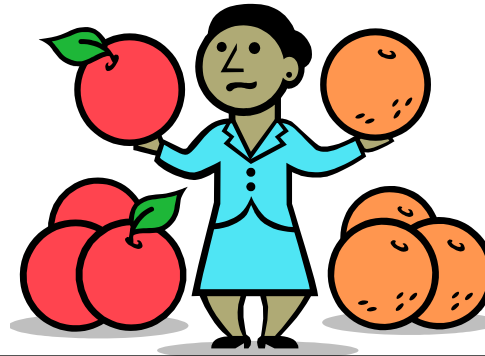


Time to Re-Engineer?

- Time to refactor to improve maintainability?
 - Refactor continuous during dev & main
- Re-Engineer to Improve vs. Replace?
 - Use automated tools to upgrade as SW ages and maintenance hard
 - Change database schema
 - Improve documentation by reverse engineering
 - Code analysis tools to point to bad code
 - Programming Language translation tools



Maintenance: P&D vs. Agile



<i>Tasks</i>	<i>In Plan and Document</i>	<i>In Agile</i>
Customer change request	Change request forms	User story on 3x5 cards in Connextra format
Change request cost/time estimate	By Maintenance Manager	Points by Development Team
Triage of change requests	Change Control Board	Development team with customer participation
<i>Roles</i>		
	Maintenance Manager	n.a.
	Maintenance SW Engineers	Development team
	QA team	
	Documentation teams	
	Customer support group	

Which statement regarding P&D maintenance is FALSE?

1. The cost of maintenance usually exceeds the cost of development in P&D
2. The Agile equivalent to P&D change requests is user stories; equivalent of change request cost estimates is points; P&D releases are iterations
3. The Agile lifecycle is similar to the P&D maintenance lifecycle: enhancing working software product, collaborating with customer vs. negotiating by contract, continuously responding to change
4. All the above are true

Provocative Question

- If 2/3 cost of product are in the maintenance phase, why not use same maintenance-compatible software development process for whole lifecycle (Agile) vs. separate processes (and teams) for development and maintenance?

