MORE JOEL ON SOFTWARE

Further Thoughts on Diverse and Occasionally Related Matters That Will Prove of Interest to Software Developers, Designers, and Managers, and to Those Who, Whether by Good Fortune or Ill Luck, Work with Them in Some Capacity

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Joel Spolsky

Apress®

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For Jared,

כי אהבת נפשו, אהבו

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JOEL, APRESS, BLOGS, AND BLOOKS

"A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away . . ." Well, actually it was late in 2000, during Apress's first full year of operation. We were a tiny little computer book publisher then, with little name recognition, and we planned to publish only a handful of books that year—roughly as many books for that whole year as Apress now publishes in a single month.

I was learning the hard way about how to be a publisher and probably spending way too much time looking at web sites and programming than I should have in response to that. Anyway, one day I came across this web site called *Joel on Software*, which was run by a guy with strong opinions and an unusual, clever writing style, along with a willingness to take on the conventional wisdom. In particular, he was writing this ongoing series about how bad most user interfaces were—mostly because programmers by and large knew, as Joel and I would say, using the same Yiddish-derived NYC vernacular that we both share, "bupkis" about what users really want. And I, like many, was hooked both by the series and the occasional random essay that Joel wrote.

And then I had this epiphany: I'm a publisher, I like reading his stuff, why not turn it into a book? I wrote Joel, introduced myself, and though he was initially skeptical, I somehow convinced him that if he would turn the user interface essays into a book, people would buy tons of them and he and I would make lots and lots of money. (Of course, this was long before FogBugz became the success it is and Joel started to command serious dollars as a coveted speaker—but then we were both younger and, yes, a whole lot poorer in those days.)

Anyway, Joel added some new content to make the book more appealing and, I thought, more marketable, and suddenly, Apress had to figure out how to publish its first full-color book. The result, *User Interface Design for Programmers*, officially appeared on June 21, 2001,

and is now acknowledged as the first "blook" ever. Somewhat shockingly to the computer book industry and me, it became a runaway best seller by the standard of the times. By the way, it is still in print, still selling very well, and still worth reading. (Although, speaking as your publisher and not as your friend, Joel, how 'bout that revision?)

Anyway, some would (now) argue that *User Interface Design for Programmers* isn't a pure blook because the addition of "too much" new material that was not on Joel's web site makes it a hybrid—as I suppose befits its pioneering status.

But a few years later, Joel on Software was the most popular blog for programmers in the world because Joel of course had kept on writing these amazingly interesting essays—perhaps the most famous being the classic "How Microsoft Lost the API War," which I know literally turned parts of Microsoft's development upside down.

And then I had yet another epiphany: let's collect the best of these essays and publish them with no substantial new content other than an occasional foreword where Joel thought it appropriate. And even though 98 percent of the material in the book that became *Joel on Software* was available on the Web, and people thought Apress was nuts for publishing it in late 2004, the book has gone through ten printings and remains a best-selling book today.

Because, it still seems, when it comes to digesting the chocolate truffle that is the typical Joel essay, print is still more pleasurable for many than a browser.

But Joel hasn't stopped thinking hard about what it takes to program well or hire good programmers, nor has he stopped challenging the conventional wisdom with his insights. So I convinced him the time was right for a sequel that collected the "best of Joel" published since the first *Joel* came out in late 2004.

And so you have in your hands the second collection of Joel's insights, occasional random thoughts, and yes, occasional rants—all encased in the sparkling prose that Joel is known for. And even though nothing has been done to his writing save for some minor copy editing, you do have the latest "best of Joel" in a very high-contrast form compared to your screen or even your Kindle, known now as a "blook." (And Joel, I obviously hope you will enjoy them as much as you did the ones in the first collection.)

This book, like the first, has a somewhat unusual cover and subtitle. This is because Joel and I are both bibliophiles (OK, Joel is a bibliophile; I'm a bibliomaniac) and we are both very fond of the kind of thing the classic book printers of the 17th and 18th centuries did to liven up their books—and their titles. In the case of the first *Joel on Software* covers, we paid homage to Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*; here we pay homage to Hobbes's *The Leviathan* and the famous frontispiece where the giant is made up of lots of individuals, because both Joel and I felt this was not a bad metaphor for how programming is done: individuals building something gigantic—but individuals are the key.

Finally, on a more personal note: In spite of his now substantial fame, Joel remains a down-to-earth kind of guy, or again in our common vernacular, a true mensch and someone I am proud to have as a close friend.

Gary Cornell
Cofounder, Apress

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joel Spolsky is a globally recognized expert on the software development process. His web site, *Joel on Software* (`www.joelonsoftware.com`), is popular with software developers around the world and has been translated into over 30 languages. As the founder of Fog Creek Software in New York City, he created FogBugz, a popular project management system for software teams. Joel has worked at Microsoft, where, as a member of the Excel team, he designed VBA, and at Juno Online Services, developing an Internet client used by millions. He has written three previous books: *User Interface Design for Programmers* (Apress, 2001), *Joel on Software* (Apress, 2004), and *Smart and Gets Things Done* (Apress, 2007), and is the editor of *The Best Software Writing I* (Apress, 2005). Joel holds a BS from Yale in computer science. He served in the Israeli Defense Forces as a paratrooper, and was one of the founders of Kibbutz Hanaton.