

Antipattern: Emotional Attachment

Author(s): Tobias

Very often, people involved in software development have certain preferences for frameworks, programming languages, or architectural approaches to which they cling, regardless of whether these preferences solve the current problem. Likewise, people may become emotionally attached to a solution because they have struggled with other approaches in the past and do not want to repeat that experience. Or the other way around, people may become emotionally attached to a solution because the team came up with a good solution and want to stick to it. The crucial aspect here is the emotional part, which leads to sticking to certain solutions.

It should be mentioned that an emotional bond can also have positive sides. For example, often a positive emotional attachment to a product in which someone is involved has a positive effect on the product itself. It becomes problematic when decisions are made for emotional reasons and objective facts are ignored.

What are some examples?

Binding to an ecosystem
Building a self-made framework instead of using an existing one
Sticking to a poorly functioning platform / decision
Developers see the system as their “baby”
Legacy systems based on outdated technologies
Reusing well known but unsuitable software for a new task

Why does this happen?

Fear of losing face when changing an architectural approach or technology
Fear of having to learn something new
Painful experience with a certain type of solution
Overconfidence that you can do better
Fear of throwing away existing things and having “wasted” time
Being proud of someone’s solution and the desire for appreciation
Be very convinced of a manufacturer without evaluating the concrete

solution

How can we avoid getting into the situation in the first place?

Create a regular evaluation/review loop for making decisions
Create a safe space to reduce the emotional aspects
Use of objective/neutral evaluation templates
Obtain a neutral opinion
Clarify that reevaluating is not a personal devaluation of an existing solution
Introduction of an error culture can address fears

What are suggestions to get out of the situation if we ended up in it?

Same as above (avoid getting into the situation)