

File 20120501.1900: Notes on writing a good narrative: the following quotation from [1, p. 1] is well worth noting for its style:

In the early 1980's [*sic.*], Westpac was searching for ways to improve productivity. The management of the bank recognized technology wasn't just a way to reduce costs, but a potential competitive weapon.

Other relevant quotations:

When FSD was hired, there was a vision only. There were no functional requirements.

[1, p. 4].

...and ...

Some issues particularly rankled the Westpac folks. They knew they had to use Westpac's existing IBM hardware and software, but FSD required a military style "build or buy" decision for everything including hardware [1, p. 4].

...and ...

I often sat in status meetings where project managers would lie through their teeth about progress.

...and ...

I wrote a program that scanned programmer libraries. It disclosed that more than 90% of the "finished" code simply did not exist anywhere...management subsequently instructed me to destroy the program [1, p. 5].

...and ...

CS/90 was not a failure of technology. It was a classic example of two common human behaviors: a willingness to abdicate "common sense" when presented with a "sure thing" and a failure to respond when faced with overwhelming evidence to the contrary [1, p. 5].

...and ...

Ironically, with the resources that were thrown into CS/90, all of Westpac's systems could probably have been replaced with a clean modern design, using only traditional tools. There was no need for a magic bullet [1, p. 5].

...and ...

There was often the illusion of careful project management where none, in fact, existed [1, p. 5].

...and ...

Treat all technology claims with deep cynicism. Any technology that has not already been proven in the target environment and at the target system's scale must be rejected out of hand [1, p. 5].

...and ...

Every generation of computer scientists "discovers" reuse, yet so far it has been impossible to achieve more than modest gains from reuse [1, p. 5].

I asked Prof. Glass to send me the reprint of his 1993 *The Software Practitioner* (Special Issue on Lying to Management). He wrote back to say he would send it in the post, and referred me to Chapter 2 of [2] for more of the same material.

## References

- [1] Chris Craddock. Tales from the “academic mafia” — the REAL inside story of Westpac’s CS90. *The Software Practitioner*, 9(2):1, 4–6, March–April 1999. Cited in [2, p. 225], update on the story told in [? ].
- [2] Johann Rost and Robert L. Glass. *The Dark Side of Software Engineering: Evil on Computing Projects*. IEEE Computer Society Press, Los Alamitos, California, 2011.