

What is going on here?

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.. container:: navbar
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Well, firstly this is a book about how to be an IT manager, for IT managers, by an IT manager. I wrote it to be the book *I* would have wanted when I started out. I choose IT manager as a career some time ago (International Movie Idol seemed to involve too much travel and long hours. Have you seen the bags under George Clooney’s eyes. I’m well out of it. Honest.)

Of the several things I enjoy doing when I am not working, I enjoy cooking (and, of course, eating), and a while back I learnt to cook a “proper” risotto. I stood over the pot, Jamie Oliver propped up on the scales, slowly ladling in stock and testing the “bite” of the rice every few minutes. I made a fairly decent risotto if I do say so, and I kept on trying, and occasionally ordering from different restaurants to see how I compared. I had the technical part down. But one thing always bothered me - it would take me a good hour to cook a risotto, but each restaurant could turn around my dish in ten minutes, whilst cooking others at the same time. It seemed like they knew a way to cook rice that I did not, a secret method, better rice perhaps? Then I read a second cookbook. This one mentioned how “real” restaurants cook the base the day before, stop just as it gets al-dente and cool off the rice. Then when I place my order it can be whipped out of the fridge and used as a base for piping hot risotto. Other authors explain a chain of tricks, how the chicken from Sunday becomes the stock for Monday’s risotto, which becomes Wednesday’s mozzarella cakes.

Several questions came to mind. “why didn’t you mention that first time around?” was high on the list. But deeper was the question “if I was learning to be a Head Chef, how on earth would I find the tips and tricks like that.” For a restaurant that cooks good risotto but you wait an hour for it to turn up will go bust quick. An IT department that cannot manage to release that vital new feature in less than 3 months is in a very similar position. And no matter how good your technical skills are, if there is no rice ready in the fridge, nothing will get a risotto out in less than an hour.

Cooks are expected to serve tutelage under head chefs, where presumably they pick up things like this (although given some restaurants I go to this may not be a hard and fast rule). But the IT industry has grown at such a pace that mentoring like that is a rarity. Most IT managers are thrown in at the deep end, and there are a lot of customers waiting an hour or more^[1]. So I wanted to write a book containing the tricks of the trade. I hope to enliven the text with other IT professionals’ experiences and anecdotes, and this will grow in a hopefully useful manner.

This book is divided into two interwoven threads, *SoHo From Scratch* and *Real World Tradecraft*.

- *SoHo From Scratch*. This is closest to the traditional computer how-to section. I believe that every IT manager should be able to do every job that reports to her, at least to a decent level of competency. Elsewhere I liken this to ensuring that your Head Chef is able to cook well at home first. If an IT manager is not able to run a relatively simple but complete small office network first then, like a head chef who cannot cook, why do we think she can run a busy restaurant ?
- *Real World Tradecraft*. This is discussing the sort of situations we only get when actually trying to run the restaurant, like my risotto, there are plenty of situations where technical knowledge

will only get you so far - you need tradecraft. The short cuts that make the difference between a customer waiting an hour for a risotto or just ten minutes. These will rise mostly out of the SoHo discussions.

Anyway, dip in and enjoy, I hope you find some of the views you find here interesting, perhaps even stimulating. And please take the code, read it and maybe contribute back. Take care.

Just don't order fish on a Monday.

– [1] Ref to various studies showing IT projects over budget.

Docutils System Messages

Unknown target name: “1”.