What we lost in the fire

This is about all those markup consulting projects where you realise that something isn't quite as it should be. Early on, your internal alarm bells are set off by a technology choice, legacy systems or processes, or maybe internal conflicts, and you realise there are some hard decisions to make. Yes, you have bills to pay but is this one of those projects you should stay away from… or have stayed away from in the first place?

The authors have a combined fifty years of experience in the field and will impart their wisdom through war stories split into categories such as

* Markup as religion
* Systems and strategies based on misconceptions
* Office politics
* Teams lacking relevant skills or capacity
* Failure as a convenience
* Legacy

For example, what if you realise that your project was never meant to succeed? What if a legacy system stands in the way of your every deliverable but is regarded as untouchable? And what if you've been brought in to solve pressing and immediate problems but office politics, legacy systems, fundamental misconceptions or all of the above stand in your way? What if the team's skill set would be a trigger to obstruction and sabotage? What if people were losing their jobs if you were successful? Or maybe it's simply a disruptive atmosphere and more than anything it's all about breaking through that.

We take a hard look at past projects and try to analyse what went wrong and why, and what we learned from them. Perhaps we can impart some degree of objectivity on a novice in the field, or at least have him or her think again. If there is success - flipping adversity into success - we'll be more than happy to claim credit.

While the stories are unlikely to be impartially presented, the names of the innocent (and not-so innocent) will be protected. We will instead focus on distilling the essence of each story and consider patterns and common denominators so we can learn from them. The listener will hopefully learn from our mistakes while nodding in recognition - we do not claim uniqueness; if all else fails, we hope to entertain.