

NAVFIT98

The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

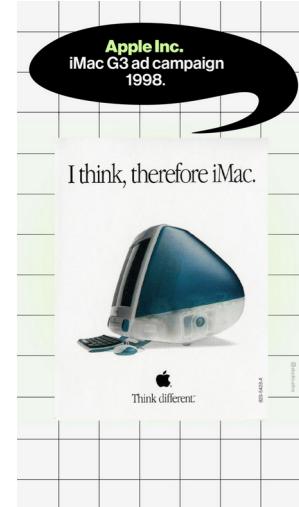
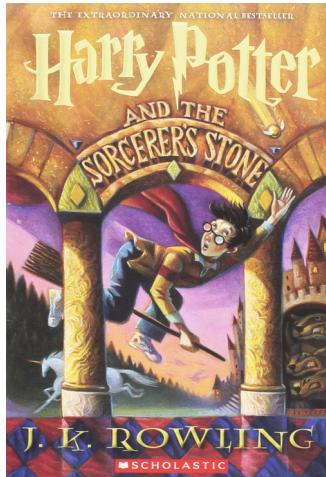
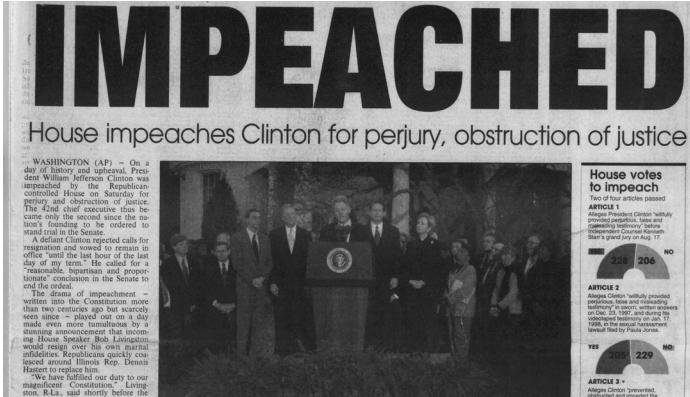
Solving the Navy's Least Interesting Problem in Talent Management

1998

NAVFIT98 is released. Written in Visual Basic, this Windows Desktop application streamlines the process of creating, reviewing, and submitting performance reports.

Most LTJGs (like myself) hadn't been born yet. To further date NAVFIT98...

- Bill Clinton is impeached.
- Larry Page and Sergey Brin found Google
- The first Harry Potter book is released
- Apple introduces the iMac



Where are we now?

- Twenty years have passed without a significant update.
- Every year, 500k-600k performance reports are **physically mailed** to NAVPERSCOM¹ (mail is the only method authorized by BUPERS 1610.10H, as NAVFIT98 has no capability to send data over the internet electronically, nor does it have useful export file formats).
- **Approximately 60k of these reported are rejected.¹**
- Rejected reports are required to be resubmitted by the originating commands, but historically, about **20% of rejected reports are not resubmitted**. In these cases, NAVPERSCOM has chosen to upload the rejected, erroneous reports into a sailor's official record to avoid gaps in performance evaluations.
- NAVFIT98 worked well in 1998. But today, sailors and N1 departments have found it tedious, error prone, difficult to setup and install, and not intuitive. Many resort to using third party tools to create reports in an effort to overcome bugs, formatting issues, and installation errors in NAVFIT98, resulting in thousands of man hours lost that could have been spent on warfighting.

1. Performance Evaluation FAQs, August 2025

The Problem

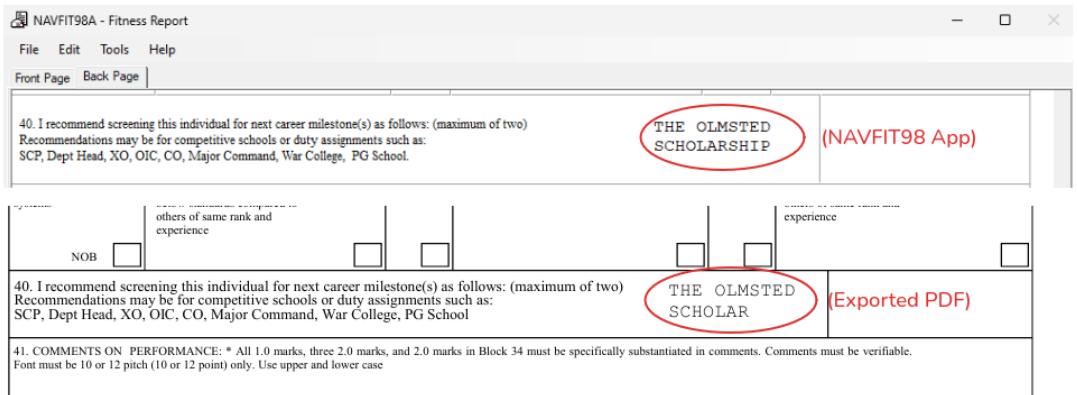
What makes NAVFIT98 “bad”?

- Installation is difficult.
 - NAVFIT98 is notoriously difficult to install, both for N6 sailors installing it in their ship's IT systems, and for sailors at home trying to stay on top of admin tasks.
- Poor data validation.
 - NAVPERSCOM published a list of the most common reasons reports are rejected; **almost all of the listed errors can be prevented with software validation logic**, but this has yet to be added in NAVFIT98 updates.
- Frequent bugs and crashes.
 - Sailors often report NAVFIT98 hanging, throwing errors, or entirely crashing, occasionally resulting in data loss.
- Maintenance issues.
 - NAVFIT98 was written in Visual Basic, and antiquated language that is no longer in development. Maintaining software written in a dead programming language is difficult. Additionally, it makes it unnecessarily difficult to add new features.

The Problem

- Printing inconsistencies.
 - NAVFIT98 was built as a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) app; i.e., when you create a report, the printed report is supposed to look exactly like the virtual report in the app. For many of the blocks in the reports, the app prints the data incorrectly. This bug persists in the most recent version of NAVFIT98.
- Import/Export deficiencies.
 - Aside from PDFs, the only way to export data is to a Microsoft Access Database file (.accdb). This choice to use this uncommon file format limits NAVFIT98's compatibility with modern software, and it makes installation more difficult/
 - Additionally, sailors have reported problems when importing .accdb files into NAVFIT98. Without a working method to export/import report data, sailors resort to using text editors, email, and other third-party tools to route data for each block in their reports to their CoC. This slows the process, and results in a higher rate of rejected reports (since no software validation is used on input data).

NAVFIT98 Printing Inconsistencies Example: Various blocks, including Block 40 and 41, silently cut words or change formatting when printing.



So What?

- Administrative tasks are vital to a functioning fighting force, but they shouldn't get in the way of a warfighter's primary job.
- Unnecessary friction in admin tasks results in cutting corners, wasted time, and rejected reports.
- **The Navy itself declared that deficiencies in NAVFIT98 were hurting its talent management** in NAVADMIN 267/21:

“Dominance of the maritime domain requires innovation and forward thinking. With investments in platforms, weapons and technologies to meet evolving operational conditions, it is imperative that we invest in our most essential warfighting asset, our people. Talent management and modern development approaches are required to attract, develop, train and retain the best and fully qualified Sailors in our Navy.”

-- NAVADMIN 267/21, NOV2021

Case Study: eNavFit

- NOV2021: NAVADMIN 267/21 announces eNavFit, a program intended to address the deficiencies with NAVFIT98
- JAN2022: NAVADMIN 004/22 announces plans to sunset NAVFIT98 in late FY 2022
- FEB2022: eNavFit goes online
- NOV2022: NAVADMIN 250/22 acknowledges issues and bugs with eNavFit and pushes NAVFIT98 sunset date back to DEC2023
- NOV2023: NAVADMIN 279/23 acknowledges continued issues with eNavFit, pushing NAVFIT98 sunset date back to DEC2025
- JAN2025: NAVADMIN 012/25 recognizes the failure of eNavFit, and mandates that NAVFIT98 return to fleet wide use beginning MAY2025
- MAY2025: eNavFit goes offline
- TODAY: Bugs persist in NAVFIT98's most recent update. The consensus among sailors: NAVFIT98 is still poor software.

eNavFit: What went wrong?

- **Poor Software Requirements:** eNavFit was built as an *online-first* app; i.e., it assumed offline usage would be an edge case, and that being offline would not be part of any command's standard operating procedure. This assumption made its adoption impossible for platforms that routinely have no internet connection (eg submarines).
- **Lack of Training:** Sailors reported that eNavFit was unnecessarily complicated and they didn't adequate training to use it.
- **Poor Feedback Loops:** Sailors did not have an adequate mechanism for giving feed back on eNavFit deficiencies, and updates to fix bugs were slow to be released.

NAVFITX

- All the aforementioned problems with NAVFIT98 are trivial to solve with software when using a modern programming language.
- NAVFITX is a future-proof, drop-in replacement for NAVFIT98
 - **Backward compatible:** No new training necessary. NAVFITX (pictured on the right) has a legacy interface that looks and functions exactly like NAVFIT98, minus the bugs. Need to import a .accdb file that your sailor made in NAVFIT98? NAVFITX can do that too.
 - **Future-proof:** NAVFITX includes an API, which makes adding import/export formats trivial. This also allows users to enter data in multiple ways; use the legacy UI, or validate and convert text files to PDFs, or run NAVFITX as a server and access it via the browser from another computer. No more lines on the ship for the one working instance of NAVFIT98.
 - **Open-source:** Bugs are easy to find when many eyes can see the code. Fortune 500 companies use open-source code when they want to develop high-quality and secure code, with tight feedback loops.

