



From Our Readers

Ward/Quaid Punks Strike a Chord

Nicely written! [*“Everything We Need to Know About Program Management, We Learned from Punk Rock,” July-August 2005.*] I’m a month out from taking over PMA-226, the Marine CH-46 helo program, and I’ve been reading everything I can find to get in the right frame of mind. Ward and Quaid’s article did it. Who’d ever expect to find Gonzo writing in *Defense AT&L*?

Rock on,

Lt. Col. H. J. Hewson
U.S. Marine Corps

Turk and Gadeken Give Sound Advice

Wayne Turk’s excellent article, “Quality Management—A Primer” in the July-August issue was chock full of practical tips, turning an abstract term (quality) into something tangible, and passing on expertise so that our younger, less experienced managers don’t have to learn the hard way—by trial and error.

I especially liked the emphasis on keeping a management reserve. Thank you, Mr. Turk, for pointing out that it is not always popular, but is still a prudent thing to do. On all projects, unexpected things happen, so why not keep some extra funds to deal with extra work?

I also appreciated the emphasis on using Earned Value Management. Too often, especially in my area (software), people want to state that they’re 50 percent, 80 percent, or 95 percent complete without any objective

basis for coming to such a conclusion. EVM sure beats gut-feel any day.

Perhaps the most important nugget was about requirements: avoid scope creep without additional funds; and prioritize requirements so that you know what can be eliminated if budget cuts come. Better to have a less functional product than no product at all!

More Than Rules

I also enjoyed Owen Gadeken’s article “Ethics in Program Management” in the same issue. I agree strongly that organizational culture and leadership are critical factors in maintaining an ethical organization. I liked his analysis of value conflicts: “right vs. wrong” and “right vs. right.” It’s so easy for people to lose sight of the six pillars (basics) of ethics, and how hard it can be to follow all of them at the same time. I would like to add a third values conflict: “right vs. the appearance of wrong.” Something can be legitimate (like taking a modest gift from a contractor) yet can give the appearance of not being okay. I suggest that people—especially leaders—avoid even the appearance of impropriety, as subordinates are always watching and following examples.

I think it is interesting that more people don’t realize, as the article points out, that “ethics is ... much more than just a set of rules.” The recent mandatory all-hands training on ethics seemed to me to be education on the rules, and not the values. I’d be interested in knowing what Dr. Gadeken thought of it.

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The fairy’s name was Garble. Everyone agrees this is not a nice name for a fairy at all, and it may have accounted somewhat for her disagreeable disposition. Truly, how well behaved could a fairy be if she is given a name like that? Can you imagine a good fairy named Garble? Nor can I.

Being a naughty fairy, Garble would amuse herself by engaging in fairy mischief, such as hiding Jack’s knife or pinching his leg. One day, a farmer came to Clever Jack asking him to make a new left-handed smoke-shifter. Garble was hiding in a shadow, listening to the men talk. When the farmer said “left-handed smoke shifter,” Garble reached out and snatched the word “left” from the air between them and replaced it with the word “right.” So Jack built a beautiful right-handed smoke-shifter. This did not suit the farmer at all, for as it happened, thanks

to an encounter with a sharp piece of farm machinery, he had only one hand, and it was not the right one.

The confusion pleased Garble greatly.

The situation with the farmer was soon put right—or rather, put left—and Jack went on about his business. But Garble loved her new game and poured all her effort into switching one word for another and generally making a mess of things (which naughty fairies love to do). Jack took great pains to make sure he understood the requests he received, and Garble took great pains to change every single one. Whenever a farmer said “left,” Garble made sure Jack heard “right.” To make sure he’d got the request right, Jack would repeat it, saying “right,” which, thanks to Garble, sounded like “left” to the farmer. Both believed