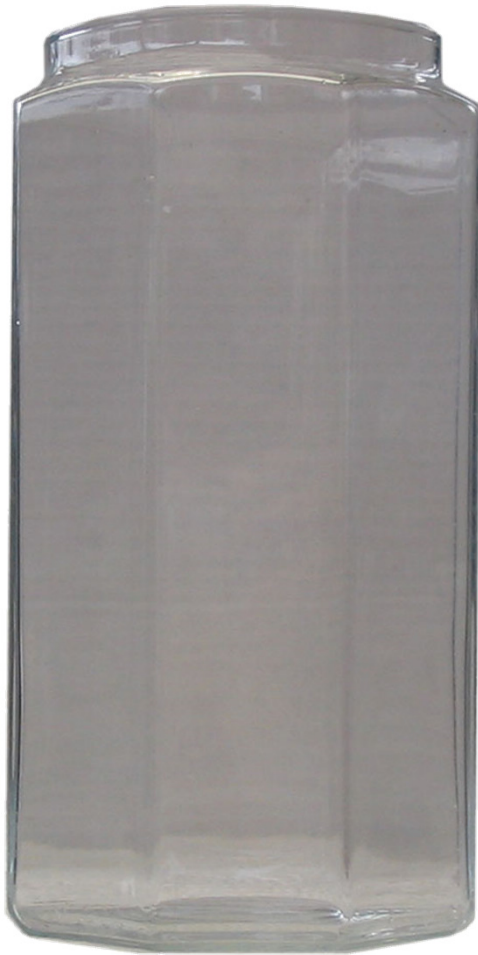




Seven Lies my Project Manager told me

Ralf C. Adam
TIGERTEAM PRODUCTIONS

This lecture was first held in August 2006 at the GCDC Game Developer's Conference in Leipzig/GERMANY. The presentation may not include all original materials shown during this speech (pictures, videos etc.) and is solely meant as a summary and handout. All copyrights of presented materials belong to their respective owners.



Question...



**Do you
think this
glass is
filled?**



**Or do you
think it's
maybe now?**



Or now...?

INTRODUCTION



Well...

- Important lesson: Would have not worked the other way round (Water first, then sand, then pebbles etc.)
- Big stones are like the big important elements in your project – your core features, main action-loops or your mission statement!
- They need to come first!
- If you do not create them in the beginning they will kill your project later
- If you only take one lesson with you from this talk then it should be this one!

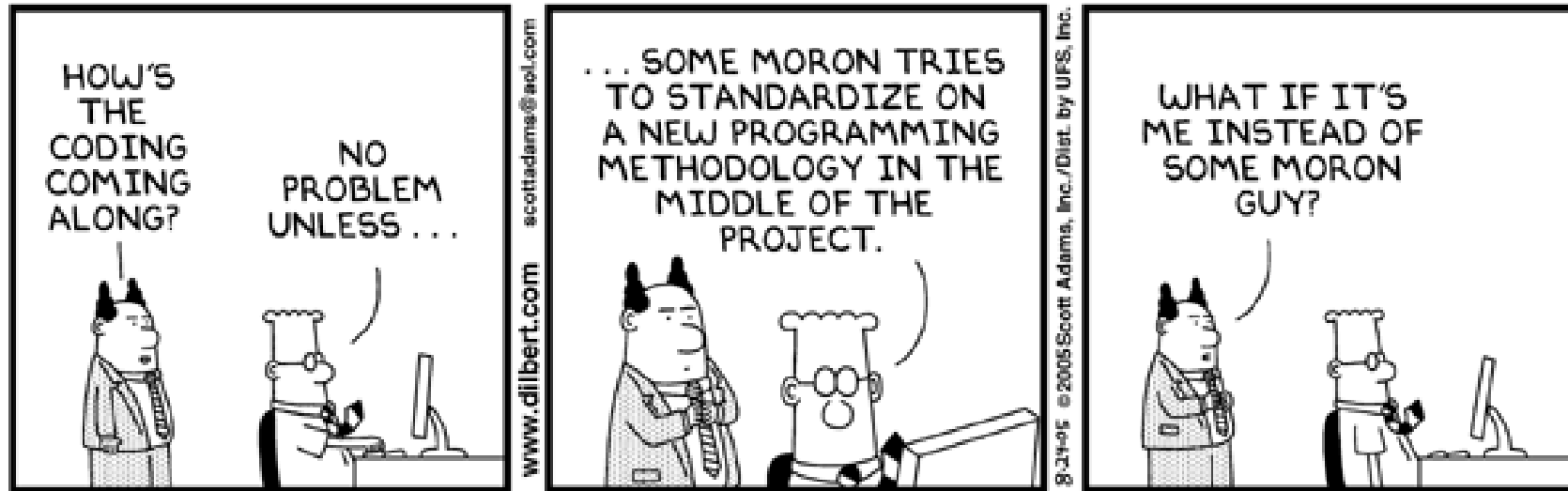


Most people think that projects fail ...

- ... because of an inexperienced Project Manager
- ... because of technical problems
- ... because of tight schedules
- ... because of tight budgets
- ... because of tight resources

➔ *Truth is: Most Projects fail because people got blinded by project lies!*

LIE #01



© Scott Adams, Inc./Dist. by UFS, Inc.

»Project Management
does not work in general!«

#01. THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT LIE

Project Management does not work – Lesson #1:

- You've made a great project plan ...
- ... but the team members moan:
 - * It's unrealistic!
 - * It's not comprehensible!
 - * It's just academic bullshit!
- After 2 – 3 weeks plan is not up-to-date anymore
- After 1 month it disappears in the drawer

→ Conclusion: Project planning is waste of time?

#01. THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT LIE

Project Management does not work – Lesson #2:

- You're making a project kick-off ...
- ... but the team members moan:
 - * What a self-deceptive event!
 - * This will never work!
 - * We will show those suckers!
- Team builds factions that fight each other
- Project manager swears that he will never do it again

→ Conclusion: Project management kills motivation?

#01. THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT LIE

Project Management does not work – Lesson #3:

- You're buying THE project management bible ...
- ... and print out 3 forms from its DVD ...
- ... but the team members:
 - * Start calling you ,bureaucratic moron'!
 - * Fill out those forms only under protest and sloppy!
 - * Or ignore them at all!

➔ Conclusion: All Books on project management suck?

#01. THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT LIE

So what went wrong?

- Never use any PM method across the board!
- Before using any tool/method ask yourself:
 - * Is the technique delivering what I need?
 - * Could I do without it?
 - * What does it bring?

→ *It's not the method – it's the modification!*

#01. THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT LIE

Setup your own rules!

- Never dictate any methods or tools!
- Enforcements don't create acceptance
- Ask the team members:
 - * How can we do this more effective?
 - * How do we treat tasks?
 - * Which tools for PM shall we use?
 - * How do we treat delays/slippage?
 - * How do we handle risks?
 - * and so on ...

→ *Acceptance always comes before the method!*

#01. THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT LIE

Keep in mind:

- Only use methods that fit to your team
- Better inefficient & accepted than efficient & not accepted!
- There's no „Too simple!“
- It's not about creating something new ...
- ... but about creating something of your own

→ *Never use a solution out of the book!*

#01. THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT LIE

Plan your project “Hitchcock Style”:

- Go from big to small:
 - * Start with a work breakdown structure
 - * Define your quality criteria
 - * Break down the tasks & time estimations
 - * Define priorities and interdependencies
 - * Define your Milestones and Deadlines
 - * Create a risk plan
- ➔ ***Project Management only works when used in the right order!***

LIE #02



»I am the Project Leader – so
I have to lead the team!«

The role of the Project Leader is not ...

- ... to lead his team
- ... to think for his team members
- ... to run the individual departments
- ... to track the status of each individual task
- ... to dictate the rules

→ *The strongest Leaders have the weakest teams!*

The wise Project Leader...

- ... delegates responsibilities to team members
- ... does not give the answers but raises the questions:
 - * Who does...?
 - * What (Goal + Definition)?
 - * Why (Cause)?
 - * For what?
 - * Until when?
 - * How (to get there)?
 - * With what?

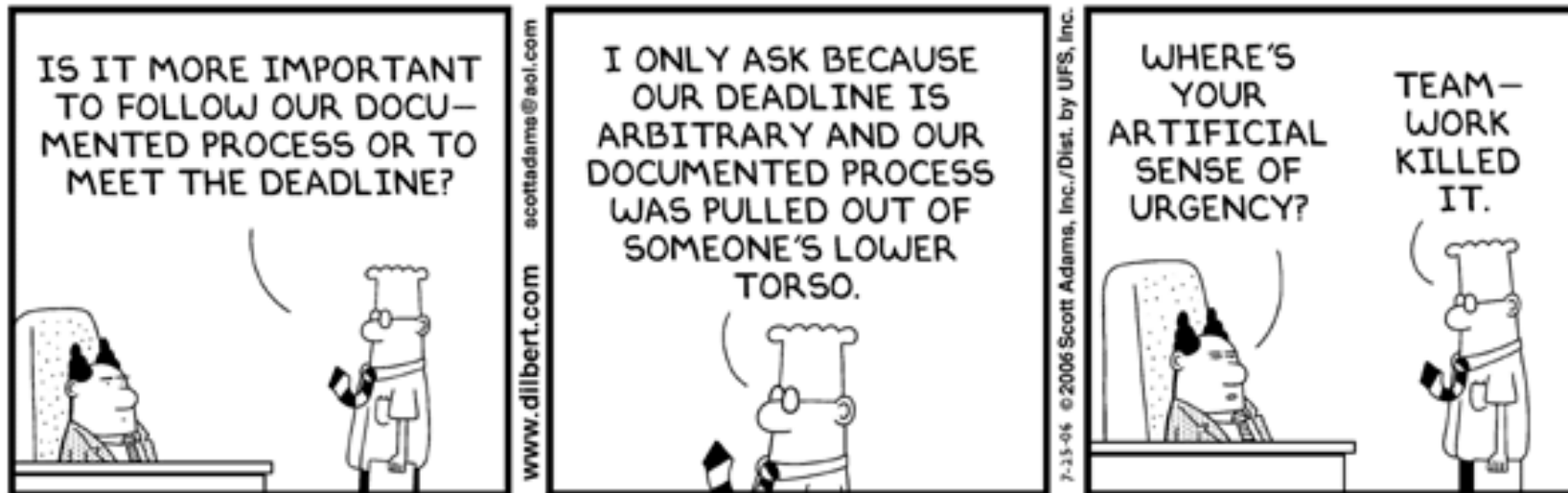
→ A smart Leader does not lead but enables!

But that does not mean ...

- ... that a PM has nothing to do!
- In reality a PM does not have one role but six:
 - * Production
 - * Marketing
 - * Research & Development
 - * Human Resources
 - * Finance & Controlling
 - * Managing Director of the project

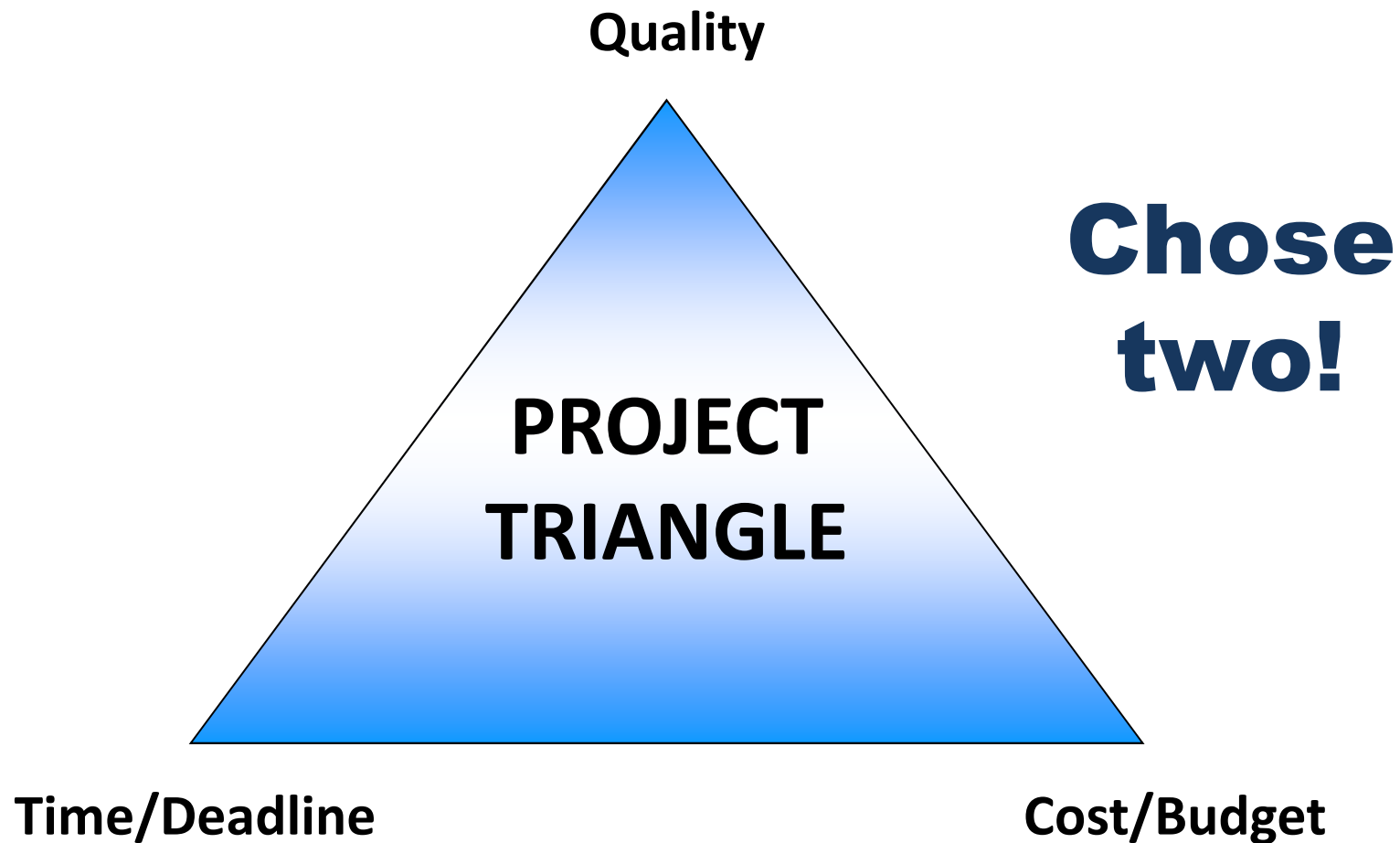
➔ *Managing the project workflow is only 20% of a Project Manager's work!*

LIE #03



»We have to plan
for this Deadline!«

#03. THE DEADLINE PLANNING LIE



#03. THE DEADLINE PLANNING LIE

You've been here before?

- Gold Master date is October '06
- First Milestone is not delivered on time
- Do you adjust GM date & planning?
- No! You will say:
 - * We're still on track
 - * Those MS are not that important
 - * We will catch up later in the project
 - * We will throw in more resources

→ *Guess what: Game won't be finished Oct '06!*

Common Mistakes

- Planning MS dates in a way to keep the (impossible) deadline
- Assuming that all MS tasks will be finished on time
- Assuming that more resources will solve the problem
- In case of failure: plan even more for next project

→ *If you want to keep deadlines – don't plan with them!*

Plan results-oriented

- What to you want to achieve?
- How much effort does it take?
- What cost will those efforts create?
- What resources do you have?
- How long will it take with those resources?

→ *Don't plan for the deadline – plan for your resources!*

LIE #04



© UFS, Inc.

»We have to be
cheaper than the rest!«

#04. THE CHEAPER THAN THE REST LIE

How to win a pitch – and lose nevertheless:

- Publishers go for the price tag ...
- ... so let's calculate below estimated effort ...
- ... win the pitch and start ...
- ... and pray for a budget raise during development!

→ *You know what? You're doomed!*

#04. THE CHEAPER THAN THE REST LIE

What a publisher really wants:

- He wants to get what he's paying for
- He wants reliable developers ...
- ... who deliver what they've promised
- A Publisher pays every price if he believes in the solution

➔ *No sane Publisher decides on basis of the price!*

#04. THE CHEAPER THAN THE REST LIE

How to get the budget you need:

- Make clear what he gets for the money ...
- ... and what he does not!
- Don't cloud costs – make them transparent
- Instead of offering one big price, split it up ...
- ... and show all different expense factors
- Agree on renegotiations for parts that can not be scheduled precise enough at this stage

➔ *Your competitors are not cheaper, because they're cheaper, but because they forgot to list tasks!*

LIE #05



© Scott Adams, Inc./Dist. by UFS, Inc.

»We've been surprised by
an unpredictable risk!«

Who needs Risk Management anyway?

- Risk = unpredictable event?
- “You have to live with it!”
- “Somehow it will turn out all right!”
- This philosophy excludes RM automatically

→ *Don't mix up „unpredictable“ with „unexpected“!*

The four steps of successful RM

1. Risk gathering
2. Risk evaluation
3. Risk counteractive measures
4. Risk ownership

➔ ***Professionals evaluate risks – Heroes take risks (and are rewarded with a nice tombstone...)!***

Be pro-active!

1. Project control is a self-delusion ...
2. ... that leads to oversteering!
3. Ask yourself permanently:
 - * What could be the stumbling blocks of the near future?
 - * What could go wrong with the next tasks?
 - * How can we realise that as early as possible?
 - * What can we do to prevent it upfront?

➔ *It's not about control – it's about anticipation!*

LIE #06



© Scott Adams, Inc./Dist. by UFS, Inc.

»The Publisher is
so darn stupid!«

Publishers don't know ...

- ... what they want!
- ... what is technically possible (and what not)!
- ... how development works!
- ... how much it costs!
- ... how long it takes!
- ... how time-consuming it is!

➔ *Really???*

1. The Control-Freak

- Wants to control EVERYTHING
- Interferes in EVERYTHING

Result:

- Team is blocked from doing its work

Reason:

- Feels uncertain
- Misses contact to the project

Solution:

➔ *Replace control with contact!*

2. The Unreliable

- Does not keep agreements
- Does not take care for anything

Result:

- Comes with change requests out of the blue

Reason:

- Is overstrained
- Is surprised by problems

Solution:

➔ *Publisher needs problem advisor!*

3. The Ignorant

- Does not know how long something takes
- Underestimates complexity & efforts

Result:

- Comes with impossible requirements

Reason:

- Misses professional background
- Misses (personnel) competence

Solution:

→ Ask again & again patiently (do not play God)!

4. The Problem-Seeker

- Makes a mountain out of a molehill
- Goes mental when slightest problem pops up

Result:

- Antagonises the whole team

Reason:

- Again: Uncertainty
- Feels lost and without guidance

Solution:

→ Make clear decisions!

LIE #07



»I only trust my own
time estimations!«

We all know it ...

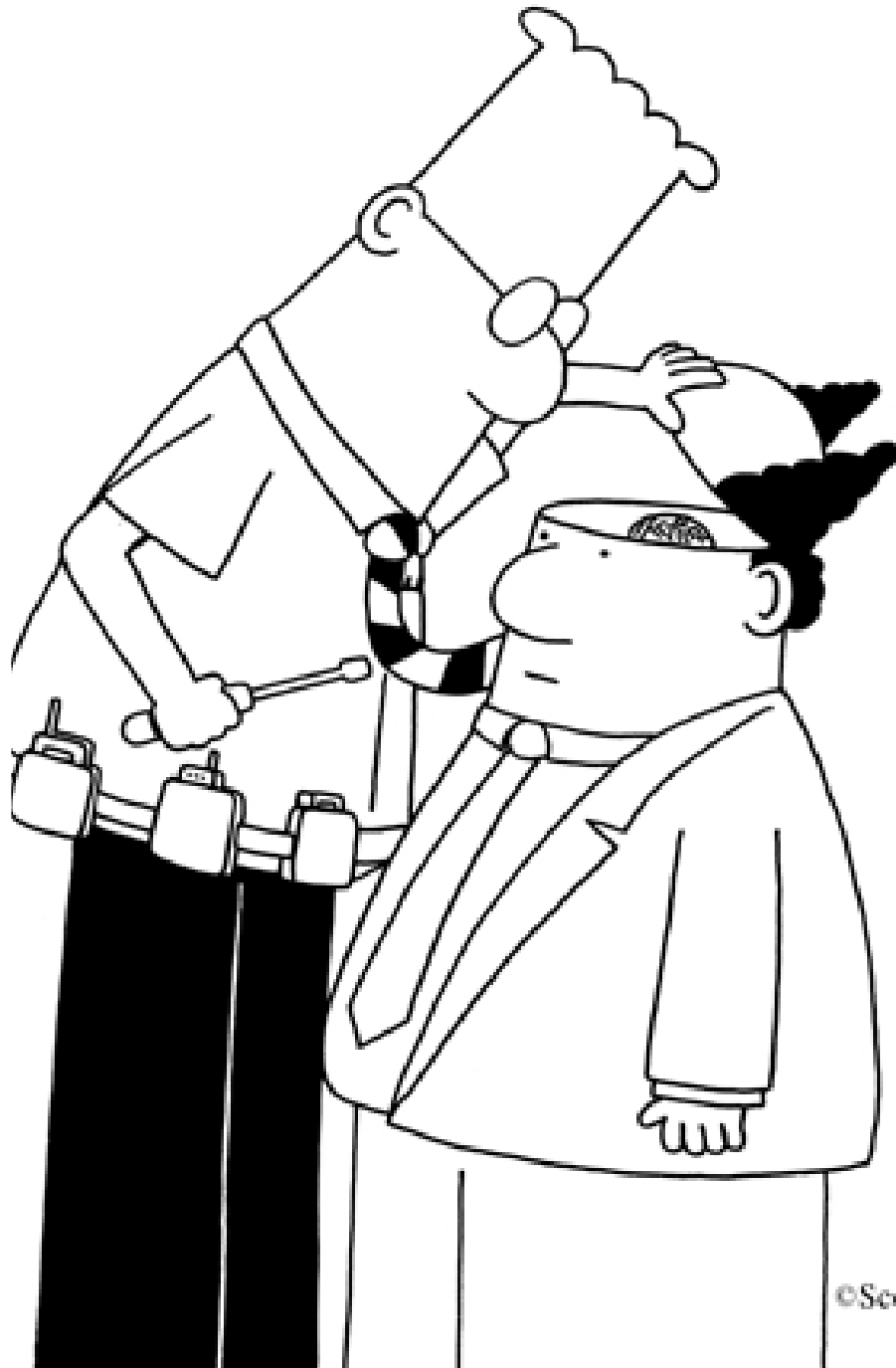
- Budgets are always too tight
- Deadlines are always too tight
- Your team members never deliver on time
- And if you ask them ...
- ... they will tell you, that they knew it before

➔ *In game development the amount of work always gets underestimated - why is that so?*

4 reasons for wrong time estimations:

1. Your estimations are too rough
2. You estimate effort instead of duration
3. You estimate other people's tasks yourself
4. You estimate with the wrong method

➔ ***Probability Law: There's a 87,5% chance that the real project duration diverges from the average value towards your worst case estimation!***



QUESTIONS?