Software Runaways: Monumental Software Disasters

By Robert L. Glass

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Failure often teaches more than success. This book shows what went wrong in 16 of the worst software disasters of recent years -- and shows how to prevent your own software disasters. Software failure expert Robert Glass reviews the major software disasters of the past decade, including both widely-publicized and less well-known fiascoes. He identifies six characteristics of impending failure, including elements rarely discussed in other software engineering texts, such as the overdependence on new technology and the failure to adequately consider performance issues. Among the failures Glass discusses are: the FAA's Air Traffic Control System; American Airlines' Confirm; and Bank of America's MasterNet. Most important, Glass presents specific lessons to be learned from each of these failures, so your software project won't show up on the nightly news. All software project managers, IS senior management, developers, and other software professionals.

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Editorial Review

Review
Read the entire review of this book.

One of the thoughts that sprang to my mind when I read *Software Runaways* by Robert Glass is that it is a good thing for the book, the author, and the publishing house that the world operates by Adam Smith's theories, where value is determined by supply and demand, instead of Karl Marx's, where value is determined by the work done. Perhaps that is a little too harsh, as Glass surely had to spend considerable time and energy compiling his articles, asking for permission to print, and lining up people to write their views on sundry topics. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that a good portion of the book (half?) consists of articles culled from print media of widely ranging technicality (from *IEEE Software* to *Computerworld* to the *Wall Street Journal*). On the other hand, most of the book, including Glass's own writing, was very readable and sometimes humorous.

-- Richard Tung, Dr. Dobb's Journal -- Dr. Dobb's Journal

From the Back Cover

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What you can learn from 16 colossal software disasters.

If failure teaches more than success, imagine how much you can learn from the most catastrophic software development failures of all time. In Software Runaways, software failure expert Robert Glass shows exactly what went wrong in 16 colossal software disasters -- and how to keep it from happening to you.

Glass goes behind the scenes of those awful projects you've seen on the nightly news -- the Denver Airport baggage system, the IRS modernization --and a host of less well-publicized failures that are equally instructive. Along the way, he identifies six characteristics of projects likely to fail -- and some of them will surprise you.

Software Runaways brings a software engineer's perspective to projects like:

- American Airlines' failed reservation system, Confirm
- The 4GL disaster at the New Jersey Department of Motor Vehicles
- The NCR inventory system that nearly destroyed its customers
- The next-generation FAA Air Traffic Control System that collapsed

Glass presents specific lessons to be learned from each failure, and shows how to "sniff out" runaway projects early enough to take action. He also considers the typical responses to potential runaways, including risk management and issue management, demonstrating their strengths and weaknesses.

Whether you're an IT executive, project manager or developer, Software Runaways helps you learn from someone else's mistakes -- and that's a whole lot less painful than making them yourself!

About the Author

ROBERT L. GLASS is an author and consulting on software quality issues who has written more than 10 books on the topic. He owns his own company, Computing Trends, and writes a column on Software Engineering for ACM Communications Magazine.

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