

Software Runaways, by Robert L. Glass, Prentice-Hall, 1998, 259 pages, includes index.

In this book, the author examines large software projects that have failed, negatively affecting the bottom line of companies and the reputations of a number of software professionals. Glass looks under the hood of the headline-grabbing failures such as the Denver Airport baggage system, the IRS modernization, the Florida Welfare system, and others to detail the telltale signs of failure.

Glass identifies six characteristics of projects likely to fail: project objectives not fully specified, bad planning and estimating, technology new to the organization, inadequate project management methodology, insufficient senior staff on the team, and poor performance by suppliers of hardware/software.

In addition, Glass identifies remedies attempted during these runaway projects: extending the schedule, better project management procedures, more people, more funds, pressure on suppliers by withholding payment, reduction in scope of project, new outside help, better development methodologies, pressure on suppliers by threat of litigation, change of technology used on the project, and abandoning the project.

Glass extensively quotes (with references) from articles that have appeared in computer industry magazines, business magazines and a number of software engineering textbooks.

In total, this text was a complete tour of major software project failures and should be required reading for software project management personnel. This text would be appropriate additional reading for classes in software project management or software engineering.

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