

CADZOW NEWS

Cadzow **TECH** Pty. Ltd.

DEVELOPING SOFTWARE FOR BUSINESS & GOVERNMENT

247 Fullarton Road, Eastwood, S.A. 5063

P.O. Box 517, Glenside, S.A. 5065

Email CADZOW@CADZOW.COM.AU

Web <http://www.cadzow.com.au>

Telephone (08) 8357 7122

Facsimile (08) 8121 9240

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HELLO, GOOD EVENING AND WELCOME

SOFTWARE MISTAKES: Part Two — Software Is Not Always The Answer

Usually, businesses want their software to match their processes, but sometimes it doesn't occur to them their processes might not be worth it. What they do may be old-fashioned, duplication of something else or simply unnecessary. This is particularly true in businesses old enough to have tasks which evolved before the personal computer era. A very simple example is archiving copies of invoices: virtually all accounting systems can reprint invoices on demand, so why have boxes of paper piled to the ceiling? The answer is, because they started doing it in 1981 and never stopped.

It is into environments like this that businesses try to squeeze modern technology. For management looking for efficiencies, or trying to solve a problem, the temptation is to introduce a big computer system. But software and processes feed each other. If you have an inefficient process, fix the process. Don't just forcibly bolt-on a piece of software. If you spend a lot of time and money making your software work according to old methods, you lock in those old methods forever, perhaps replacing an inefficient manual process with an inefficient computerised process.

On the other hand, if you are happy with the efficiency and cost of an existing manual process, why introduce a layer of computerisation? Some things don't respond well to the sudden appearance of a computer. This is why you still buy so many yellow sticky-pads!

If you are deploying new software, use it as an opportunity to evolve the processes and reform the way the business works. It's an upheaval anyway, so why not make it a good upheaval? Software is often criticised for assuming idealised conditions that don't match real-world businesses, but it's not a bad thing to occasionally think of the "ideal" way of doing something.

Step back and look at the whole system. Managers can get very valuable insight by merely walking around the factory floor or helping with front-counter sales. Software can't tell you, for example, that you're losing customers because your aisles are impassable for people with baby strollers.

Of course, empirical data is important, and that's where software does a great job. But software is best at answering questions rather than help you work out what the questions are. Before you can improve the business, you might need to know what questions to ask. Thus: SOFTWARE IS NOT ALWAYS THE ANSWER.

Of course, the opposite is also true: software is your servant and it must do thy bidding. We'll talk about this next time.

CADZOW SOFTWARE: New Features

Auditing — Cadzow 2000 has some new functions to assist financial troubleshooting and auditing.

Content Manager — Improved editing and search functions, and Cadzow Weblink has many new features.

Serial Numbers — If entering multiple items, Cadzow 2000 now prompts for multiple serial numbers.

Quotations — Invoices and purchase orders can now be created by copying a quote.

Stock on Hand — Improved reporting with some new features.

Transfer Adjustments — Can now have comments recorded against them.

COMPUTING: Notebook Batteries

Dell and Apple recently issued recalls of notebook batteries because they may overheat, and, in a famous case, actually burst into flame. Because many notebook vendors source their components from the same manufacturers, there may be more recalls on the way.

There has been some discussion within the industry that while notebooks have become faster, with bigger screens, faster hard drives and many other power-hungry, heat-generating features, too little effort has gone into dealing with the resulting heat. Additionally, users demand greater battery performance, requiring more juice packed into the same space. One theory is that heat (and corresponding safety) problems will only increase until this is dealt with at an architectural level. In the Dell case, it is said that the faulty batteries were simply a manufacturing fault and not a fundamental design problem.

In any case, regardless of the battery situation in a given model, notebook users should always follow safe procedures. Ensure the machine has space around it for air circulation and that the fan outlet is not blocked. If the machine is unattended, shut it down or close the panel to suspend, then turn it off at the power. This will let the notebook, battery and A/C adaptor cool, and the battery won't be charging or generating heat. This is also cheaper because it won't be drawing power.

COMPUTING: Phishing

Phishing is an attempt by criminals to trick you into revealing some personal information (such as internet banking details, credit card and tax file numbers) that can be used to steal from you or use your identity. Lately the most common form of phishing has been emails pretending to be from banks, Ebay, Paypal etc.

Email phishing has been around in earnest since about 2003, but recently the volume of phishing emails has skyrocketed — by our estimate, about 3 times more in 2006 than 2005. If your email address regularly receives spam, you will almost certainly receive phishing emails also. They are easy to spot, as they ask you to click on a link and enter some information on a website. Many financial institutions now explicitly state they will never ask you for information in this way. The following articles provide examples and tips:

What is Phishing? <http://www.cadzow.com.au/?Article=1228>

Phishing Examples: <http://www.cadzow.com.au/?Article=1422>

Mobile Phone Scams: <http://www.cadzow.com.au/?Article=1720>

MISSING EMAIL: Part Two — Stray Mail

If you have a domain name, most hosting providers have a "stray mail" mailbox to hold all the badly-addressed incoming email instead of issuing a failure notification. (Try sending yourself a message with the address spelt wrong and see where it turns up.) In some circumstances, this can be very handy, but if you don't know about it, you may be ignoring messages and the senders won't know the message didn't arrive.

But using stray mail is not really a good idea. A few years ago, spammers realised they can send messages to domains without knowing any real addresses. If you have a domain name and are plagued by spam, you may notice that a lot of it is addressed nonsensically. Ask your hosting provider about disabling stray mail.

Do I Need A Spam Filter? <http://www.cadzow.com.au/?Article=1174>

The Great Spam Experiment. <http://www.cadzow.com.au/?Article=1245>

COMEDY, Great Moments In

It undoubtedly helped a man in his dealings with the domestic staff to have the rights of the high, the middle and the low justice – which meant, broadly, that if you got annoyed with your head-gardener you could immediately divide him into four head-gardeners with a battle-axe and no questions asked.

Blandings Castle and Elsewhere, P.G. Wodehouse (1935)

The Cadzow team has been developing business and accounting software solutions for 25 years. Cadzow is an Australian organisation addressing the software requirements of business and government. Software solutions in the Cadzow 2000 family include: Cadzow Contact Manager, Cadzow Time Manager, Cadzow Training Manager, Cadzow Call Stats Manager, Cadzow Booking Manager, Cadzow Job Manager, Cadzow Accounts Receivable, Cadzow Accounts Payable, Cadzow Stock Control, Cadzow Weblink, Cadzow Room Manager plus many customised solutions. To learn how they can be used individually or together, visit <http://www.cadzow.com.au/?Article=1288>.

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