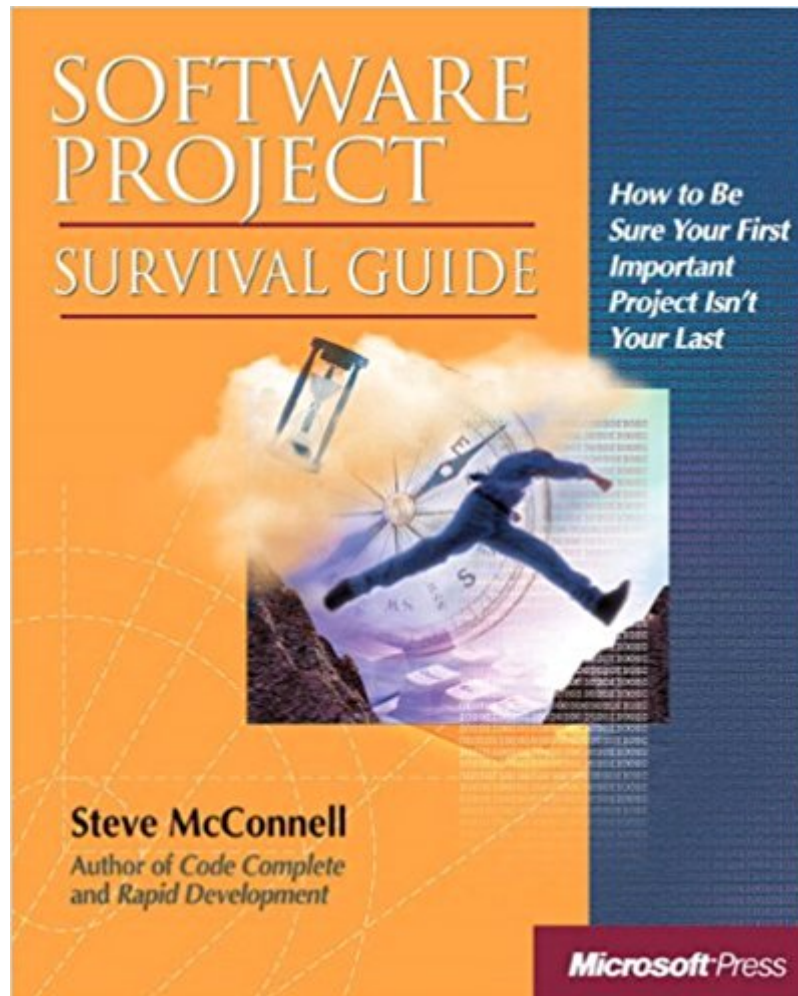




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Software Project Survival Guide (Developer Best Practices)



Synopsis

Equip yourself with SOFTWARE PROJECT SURVIVAL GUIDE. It's for everyone with a stake in the outcome of a development project--and especially for those without formal software project management training. That includes top managers, executives, clients, investors, end-user representatives, project managers, and technical leads. Here you'll find guidance from the acclaimed author of the classics CODE COMPLETE and RAPID DEVELOPMENT. Steve McConnell draws on solid research and a career's worth of hard-won experience to map the surest path to your goal--what he calls "one specific approach to software development that works pretty well most of the time for most projects." Nineteen chapters in four sections cover the concepts and strategies you need for mastering the development process, including planning, design, management, quality assurance, testing, and archiving. For newcomers and seasoned project managers alike, SOFTWARE PROJECT SURVIVAL GUIDE draws on a vast store of techniques to create an elegantly simplified and reliable framework for project management success. So don't worry about wandering among complex sets of project management techniques that require years to sort out and master. SOFTWARE PROJECT SURVIVAL GUIDE goes straight to the heart of the matter to help your projects succeed. And that makes it a required addition to every professional's bookshelf.

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Customer Reviews

Read the entire review of this book. Targeted at managers (from the top of organizations down through technical leads), McConnell's book provides a blueprint for a successfully managed project; the postulated development effort involves "3 to 25 team members and schedules of 3 to 18 months." At 288 pages, the book could be thinner, but it's easy enough to get through. McConnell has an engaging, conversational style, with a tinge of irreverent humor -- both of which make this book easy to approach. He uses little jargon and includes a comprehensive glossary, so nontechnies should find it easy enough to follow. -- Chris Jaekl, Dr. Dobb's Journal -- Dr. Dobb's Journal

Steve McConnell is recognized as one of the premier authors and voices in the development community. He is Chief Software Engineer of Construx Software and was the lead developer of Construx Estimate and of SPC Estimate Professional, winner of Software Development magazine's Productivity Award. He is the author of several books, including Code Complete and Rapid Development, both honored with Software Development magazine's Jolt Award.

In "Rapid Development," a 600-ish page treatise on software project management by the same author, Steve McConnell claims that "a book half this size would be overly general to the point of uselessness." One year later, he wrote this book, which clocks in at slightly less than half the length of Rapid Development. Coincidentally, it is overly general to the point of uselessness. There's nothing inherently wrong with this book. It's just a mad-cap race to summarize the material already available in Rapid Development into a smaller, more streamlined, significantly less useful package. If you're going to read one book on software project management, it probably shouldn't be this one. And if you've already read a book on the topic, you won't learn anything new here.

As ever, Mr. McConnell writes clearly and accurately and presents the information in a well-organized format. Although some of the material in this book is a digest of material in some of his other writings on software project management, it is, nonetheless, filled with extremely valuable insights. More to the point, the insights are presented in a practical "what to do, what not to do and what to watch out for" voice that translates easily into real-world action. Mr. McConnell recognizes, rightly, that all software lives in some kind of ecosystem and that ecosystem involves people, power, politics and a whole lot more than just lines of code and how well the software does its job. His common sense premise of "do it right early to avoid fixing it later at higher cost" coupled with suggestions on making that argument sensibly to the powers-that-be makes this book a must-have blueprint for any software development project.

As a non-technical business executive tasked with running a tech-heavy organization, I had to get up to speed quickly on best practices, methodologies and approaches to development. Our organization develops the bulk of our software internally, and the Engineering team represents nearly half of the company's expense spend. McConnell's book proved invaluable in providing checklists, ideas, best practices and a solid overview of the development process. The organization of the book was excellent, and the end of chapter notes with practices and pitfalls, as well as copious checklists provide the non-technical manager with some guideposts to understand and evaluate a mature process. As noted in some other reviews, this is probably not for the "First important project", but is best applied to a relatively mature and established process and organization. A good read and a useful book.

I'm a one-man database development shop at a nonprofit with a shoestring budget. Without the benefit of senior level programmers, I've had to learn most of my software engineering lessons the hard way- by experience. I picked up this book seven years into the job, which in retrospect was about seven years too late. In some respects, this book repeats lessons that have already become obvious through experience (e.g., software testing needs to be performed separately from development). But, this lends credibility to my judgment, and provides new insights substantiated by software engineering research studies. Non-technical management and funders are responsive to the hard figures I often find myself citing from this book. For example: 1) Programmers are 2.5 times more productive in a quiet office vs. a cubicle- so, I need to be allowed to work from home 2) The most efficient programmers are 10 times more productive than the least efficient programmers- really, you would think this would be obvious, but when work needs to be contracted, the low bidder is not necessarily the best choice over the long haul. Currently faced with my most substantial and challenging programming project yet, I'm essentially using this book as a cookbook to process. Upfront I was a bit overwhelmed with the scope of the project. Having finished the book, I have a well-defined process in place, am confident this will get done, and feel I am much more articulate describing the stages of software development to management and contracted vendors. Some presumably industry-standard strategies are proving invaluable- implementing a Top Ten Risk list to ensure that major barriers are addressed upfront rather than deferred, creating specific milestones, etc. This book (or an equivalent) should absolutely be mandatory for anyone about to take on their first major software project. It is most useful because it reads like a cookbook- guiding you through all the phases of software development, one after the other.

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