Maintainer Complexity

OPERATE. HELP DESK.[1]

Details   A Service Desk Trainee Peggy Taylor in the *Ad hoc* Support Team, received a change request from a business user, Peter Rand. It was seven pages long with many complicated looking formulae[2]. It seems that the existing report that Rand received weekly was not enough.

As a new trainee Taylor had never seen such a request before[3] and was not sure what to make of it. They followed their training and reported it to their boss, Katie Gregory, the Head of the *Ad hoc* Support Team[4].

Gregory was sure that the request was much more than a simple maintenance update: it looked like a whole new project. To be sure they called Susan Smart, the Applications Support Programmer, and Jack Neiman, the Database Administrator, allocated to the *Ad hoc* Support Team. Everyone agreed that this was not a routine support request[5]: Taylor was instructed to return the request to Rand and inform them to use the proper channels.

This time though, Rand had had enough. This was the third request that had been turned down in the past month. Obviously, Rand thought, these people must be imbeciles to turn down a perfectly simple change: it was not complicated at all to anyone who knew their stuff. He would take this to his boss, Ayn Singer, to force the *Ad hoc* Support Team to work on it.

Singer too was under pressure, to get more reports through the system, and taking Rand's side, fought back for Rand. They called a meeting with Katie Gregory, Jack Neiman, Smart's boss, and Martha Rorty, Nussbaum's boss.

The meeting started out amicably enough but deteriorated rapidly when Singer, at the end of a long and difficult day, accused the whole of the *Ad hoc* Support Team; all applications support programmers, database administrator, and their management of being incompetent for not being able to handle a simple request.

As one, Gregory, Neiman, and Rorty got up and walked out of the meeting.

"When you can talk about it objectively, call us." Gregory said.

"Otherwise, take it up with the principles[6] of the company."

Cast	Role
Katie Gregory	Taylor's boss
Jack Neiman	Smart's boss
Richard Nussbaum	Applications Programmer
Peter Rand	Business user expert
Martha Rorty	Nussbaum's boss
Margaret Sartre	Principal,
Ayn Singer	Rand's boss
Susan Smart	Database Administrator
Peggy Taylor	Service Desk Trainee
Jean-Paul Walker	Rand's boss

Table 1: M_3 Cast

[2] The problem required an applications change, a new data structure, and new, significantly different, processing procedures.

[3] The requests were usually simple, single page requests.

[4] The team that dealt with minor changes to the production system.

[5] This was not the first time that Rand had tried this sort of thing. They were constantly trying to get their requests in through the back door. *Ad hoc'* requests had much less paperwork and took far less time to get into production.

[6] Margaret Sartre and Jean-Paul Walker