Operational Excellence in April Fools' Pranks:

Being Funny Is Serious Work!

Thomas Limoncelli
@YesThatTom

stackoverflow

Photo Credit: ©iStockphoto.com/katkov

Progress towards winning the Internet

364 days have elapsed – your Site is fully graduated.

Cast your vote: What should your Site do next?

2

One vote is required in this round, one user has voted.

0%	**Ask**	Asking improves your Site's questions. Too few questions also negatively affect its answers.
0%	**Answer**	Posting answers is what your Site's life is all about. Only with many answers (and high quality!) can it attract traffic.
0%	**Upvote**	Getting upvotes on their good posts to make your Site's users happy.
100%	**Downvote**	Voting down posts is essential for your Site's quality. Unfortunately, users don't like getting downvotes on their content.
0%	**Close**	Closing bad questions gives your Site's quality a big boost, but it does so at the expense of its questions.
0%	**Nothing**	Do nothing in this round. Don't do this too often; your Site needs constant attention in order to grow!
0%	**Restart**	Give up and restart the game with a brand-new Site. This has to be confirmed by a second vote.

Questions	♥♥♥♥
Answers	♥♥♥♥
Users	♥♥♥♡
Quality	♥♥♡♡
Traffic	♥♥♥♥

StackEgg

Day 117 – Launched for 16 days

Progress towards winning the internet

11 sec

Cast

13%

39%

11%

26%

8%

3%

Nothing

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consetetur sadipscing elitr, sed diam nonumy eirmod tempor invidunt.

April 1, 2015:

10:23 StackEgg launched

13:14 +2:50 Site overloaded!

Quality

Traffic

StackEgg

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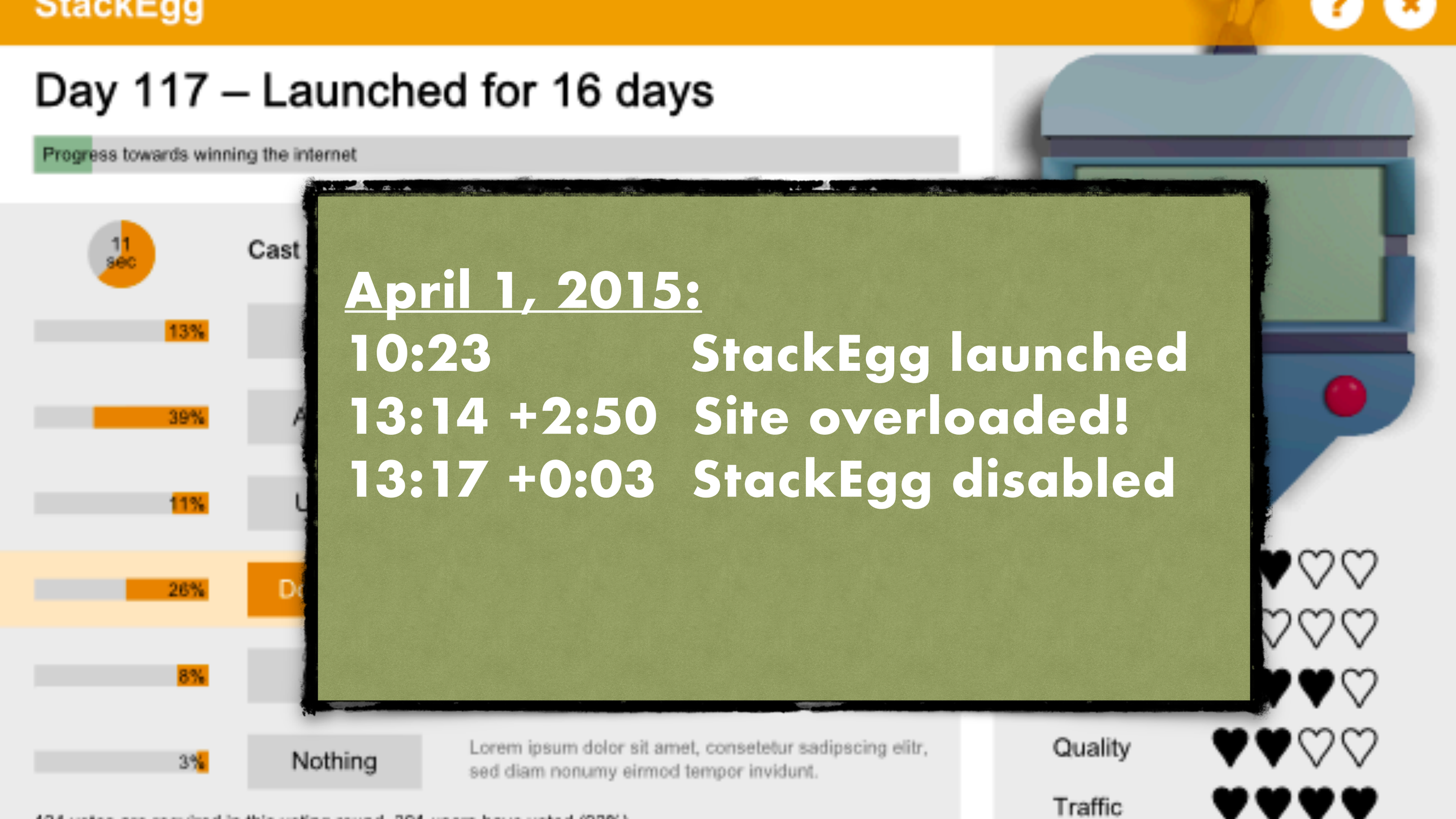

Quality

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April 1, 2015:

10:23		StackEgg launched
13:14	+2:50	Site overloaded!
13:17	+0:03	StackEgg disabled
13:47	+0:30	All good

Quality

Traffic

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Quality

Traffic

April 1, 2015:

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13:14	+2:50	Site overloaded!
13:17	+0:03	StackEgg disabled
13:47	+0:30	All good
14:56	+1:09	Re-launched

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stackoverflow

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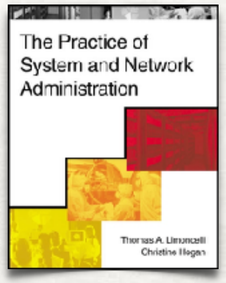
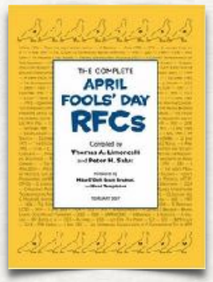
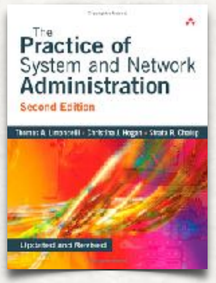
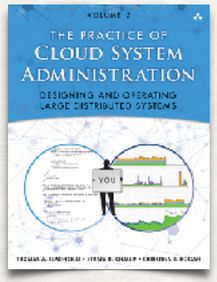
WHO IS TOM LIMONCELLI?

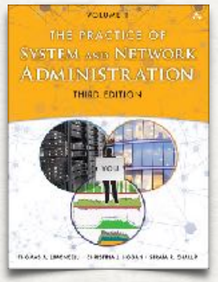
- SRE Manager at Stack Overflow, Inc (NYC)
- Sysadmin since 1988 (Google, AT&T/Bell Labs, Mentor)
- Blog: https://EverythingSysadmin.com
- Twitter: @YesThatTom
- Quarterly Column in Queue Magazine: https://queue.acm.org
- Author...











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- Sysadr abs, Mentor)
- Blog: h
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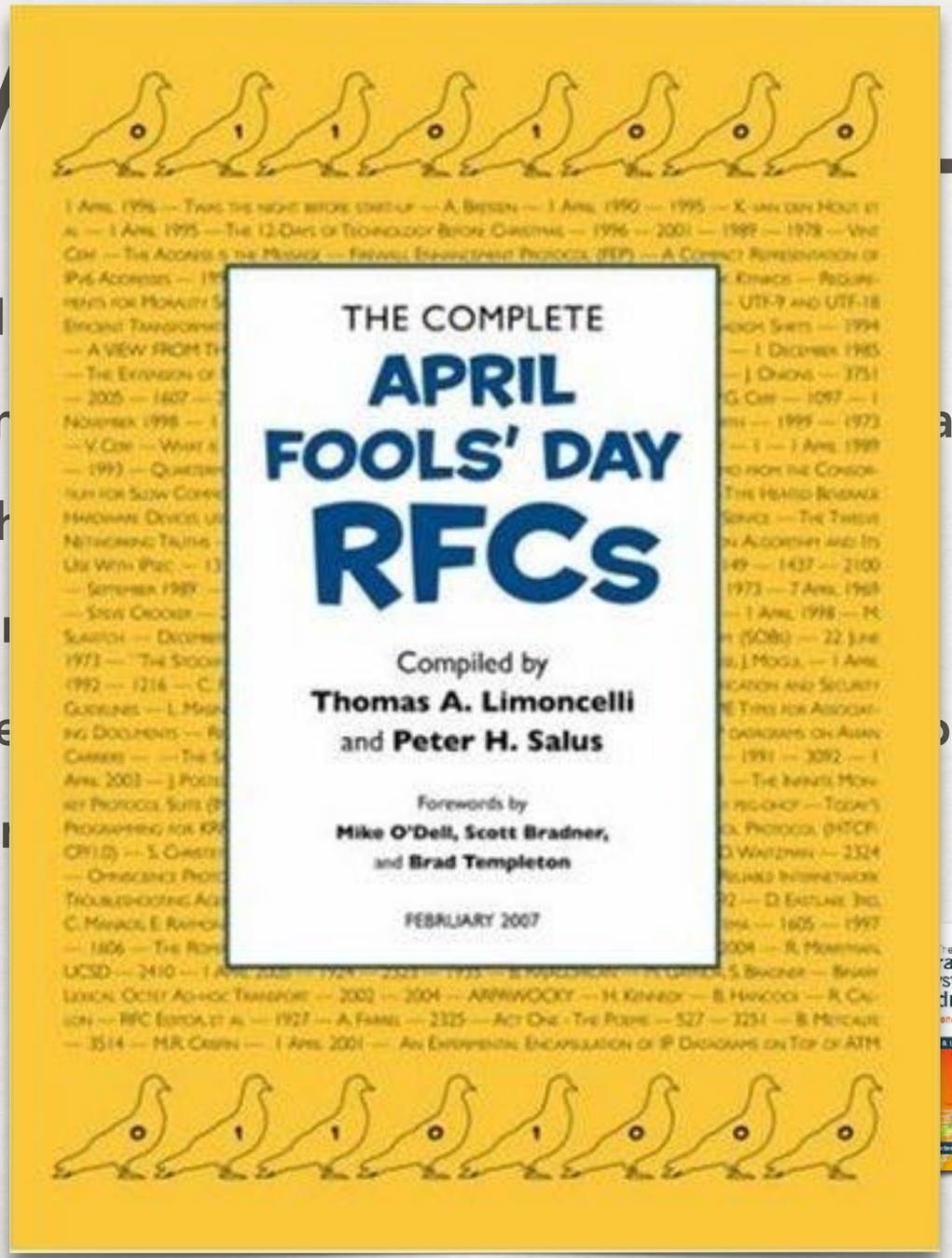
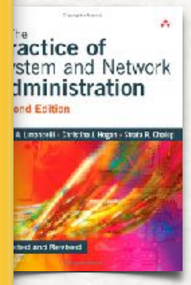
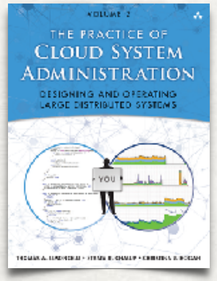
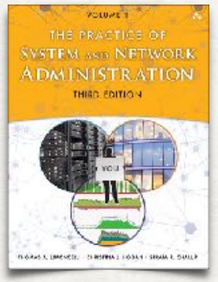
- Autho









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TALK OVERVIEW

- Something
- Not Something
- Top 5:
  - Thing
  - Thing
  - Thing
  - Thing
  - Thing
- Thing (3 parts)

TALK OVERVIEW

- Introduction You are here
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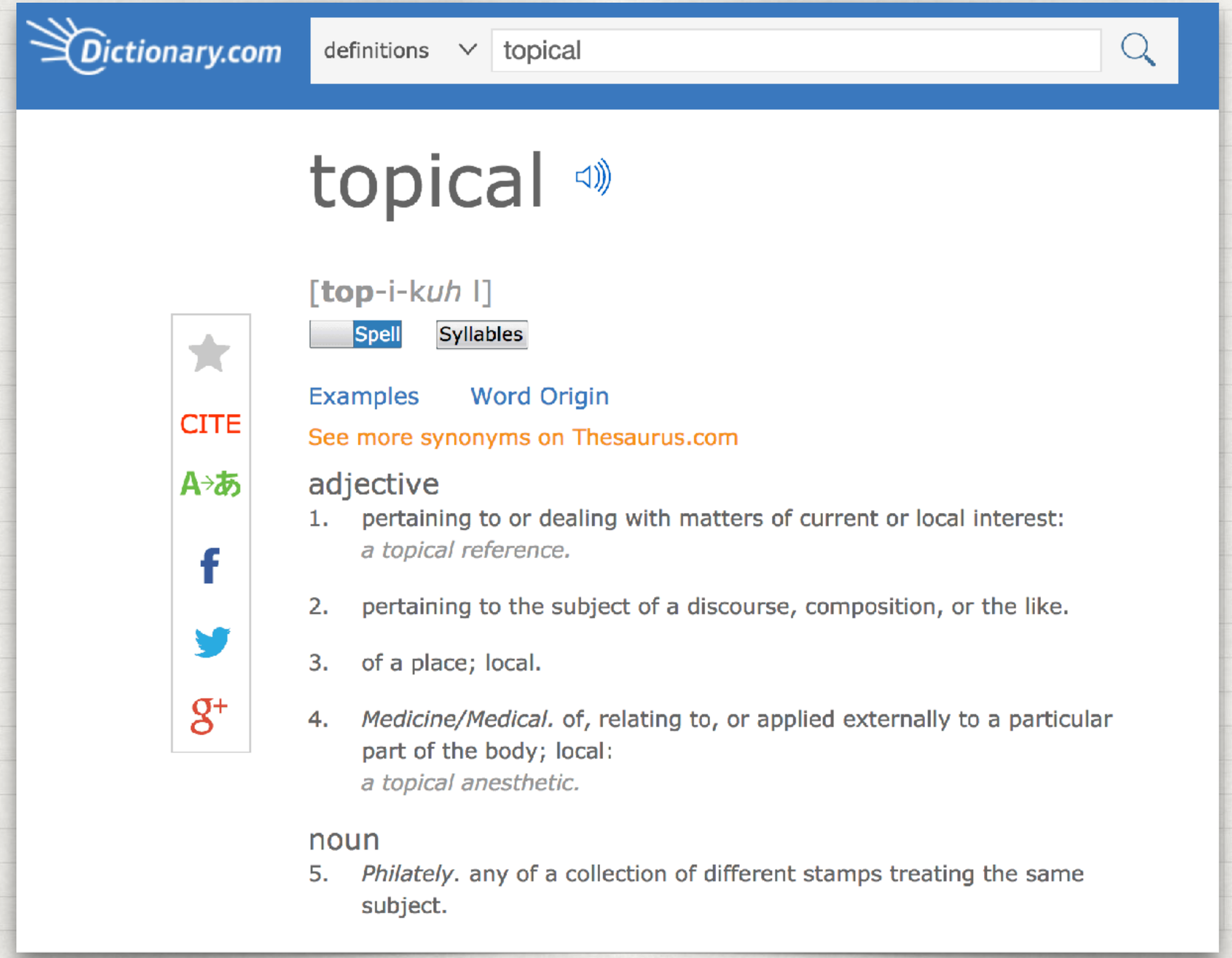
WHAT MAKES AN AFP FUNNY?

1. Topical
2. Absurdist



-1-

Topical: adj.

Pertaining to or dealing with matters of current or local interest

-2-

Absurdist:

Not simply silly for silliness' sake.

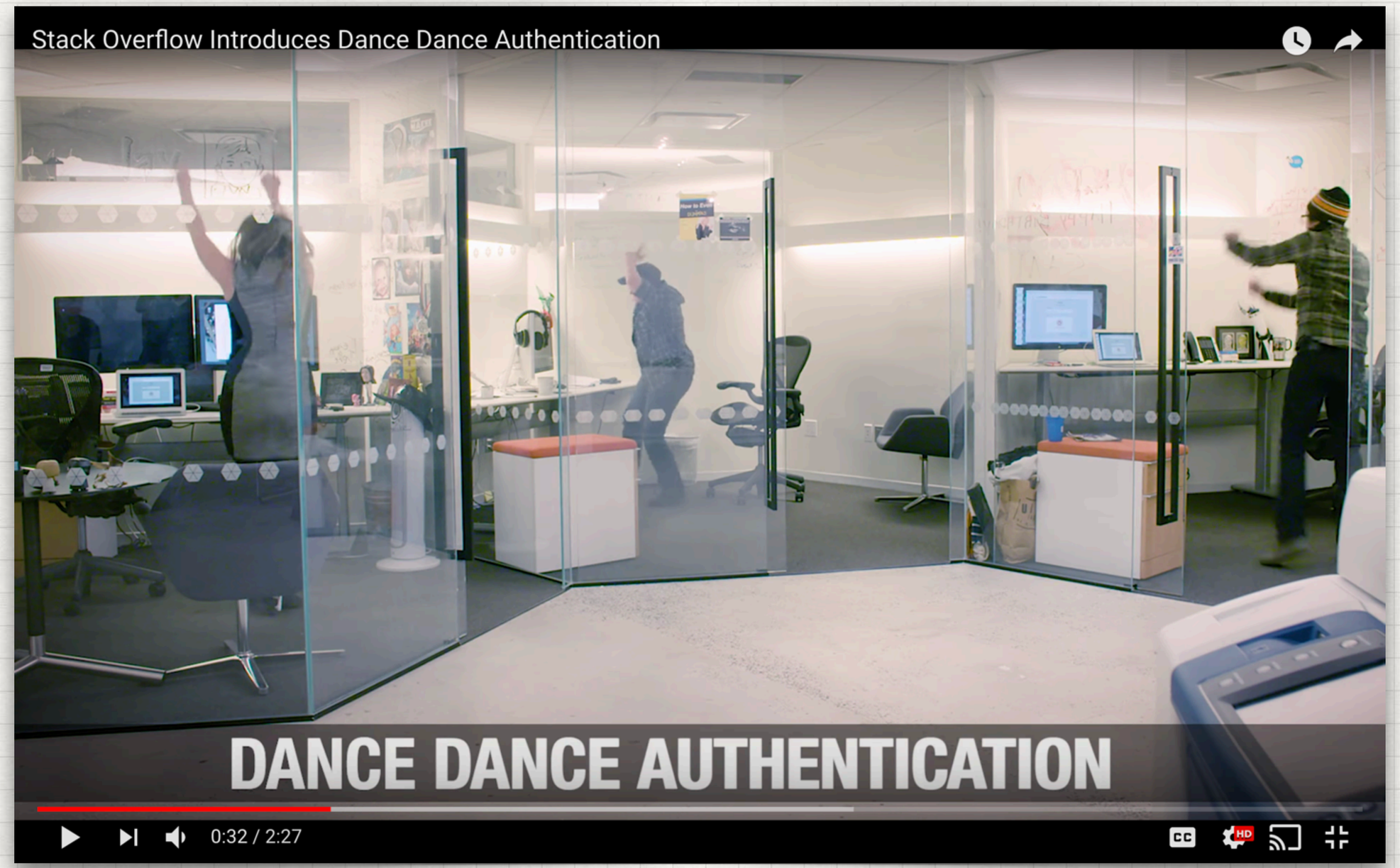
Absurdism acts as a crucible that burns away all lies to get to the truth.

-3-

Surprise:

Sudden feeling of astonishment

THE MUSTACHE STORY


Stack Overflow Introduces Dance Dance Authentication
DANCE DANCE AUTHENTICATION
0:32 / 2:27

WHAT MAKES AN AFP NOT FUNNY?

1. Hurting people
2. Punching down
3. Inside Jokes

!FUNNY EXAMPLES

- Hurting people
  - Don’t cause real harm.
  - Example: Gmail’s “Drop The Mic” prank
- Punching down
  - Don’t make fun of the downtrodden powerless.
  - Example: Racist/homophobic/sexist jokes are inherently “punch down”
  - Do: Mock people in power.
- Inside jokes
  - Make the audience laugh, not (just) you.

TOP 5 BEST PRACTICES

1. Feature Flags
2. Load Test
3. Dark Launches
4. Involve all the silos
5. Perform a project retrospective

1. FEATURE FLAGS

- Hide the feature behind a flag while in development
- Easy to enable/disable in testing and production.
- Better than shipping a new release:
  - Shipping a new release is more risky, more laborious.
  - Should you revert to old binary to ship new binary with prank disabled???

Photo Credit: CBS's BBT both helps and hurts STEM, amirite?

2. LOAD TESTING

- See how it performs under load.
- A/B test with and without prank.

Photo credit: https://huddle.eurostarsoftwaretesting.com/tips-correlation-load-testing/

3. DARK LAUNCHES

- The problem:
  - How do you load test when on day-0 you will have millions/billions users?
- The Solution:
  - Facebook's "dark launch" for Messenger.
  - Deploy the feature but hide it from users. (CSS display: hidden)
  - % users send test messages.
  - Find bottlenecks before launch.

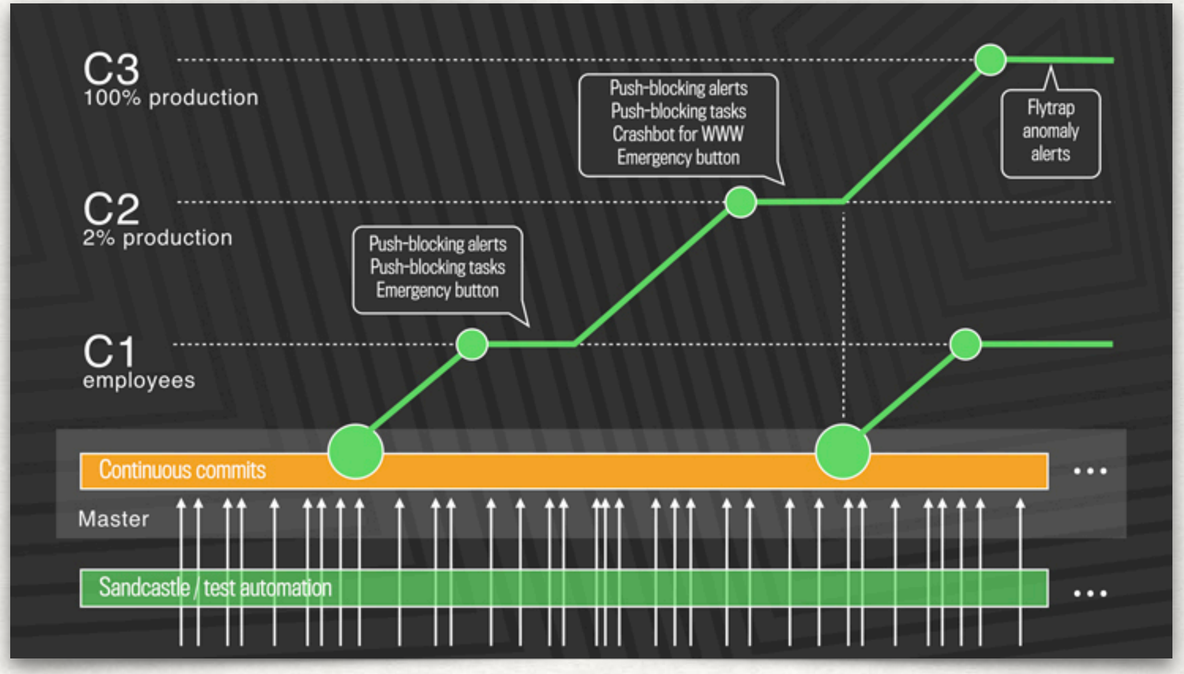


Photo Credit: https://code.facebook.com/posts/270314900139291/rapid-release-at-massive-scale/

MORE EXAMPLES

- Good:
  - Before launching IPv6, Google inserted JavaScript to silently tested for problems.
- Bad:
  - StackEgg
  - Apple Livesteam “real time updates” overloaded the website during the **iPhone 6 / Apple Watch** launch. https://everythingsysadmin.com/2014/10/apple-livestream-outage.html

4. INVOLVE ALL SILOS

- Involve:
  - Marketing
  - PR
  - Sales
  - Engineering
  - Launch control
  - Executives
- Customer support should know how to handle complaints.

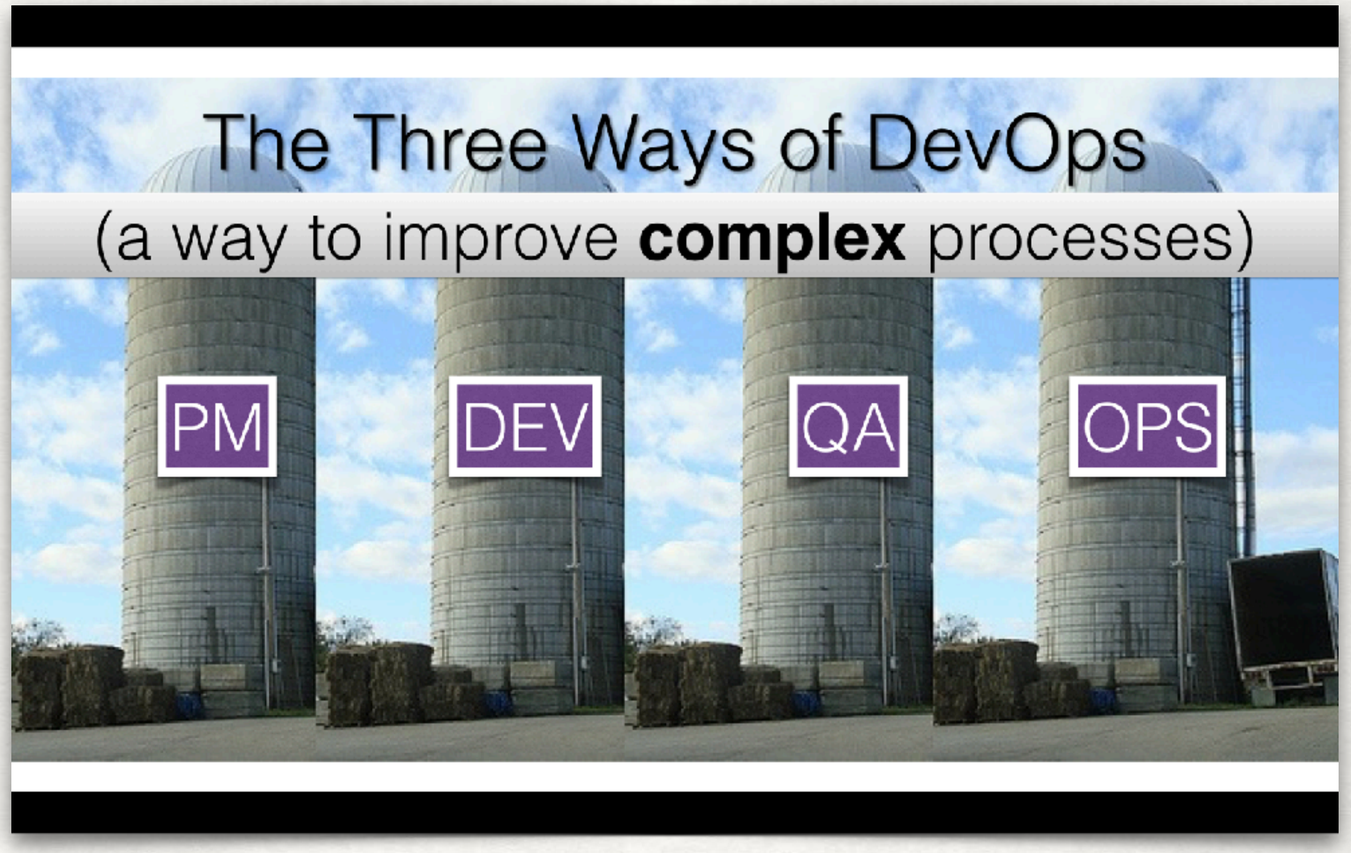
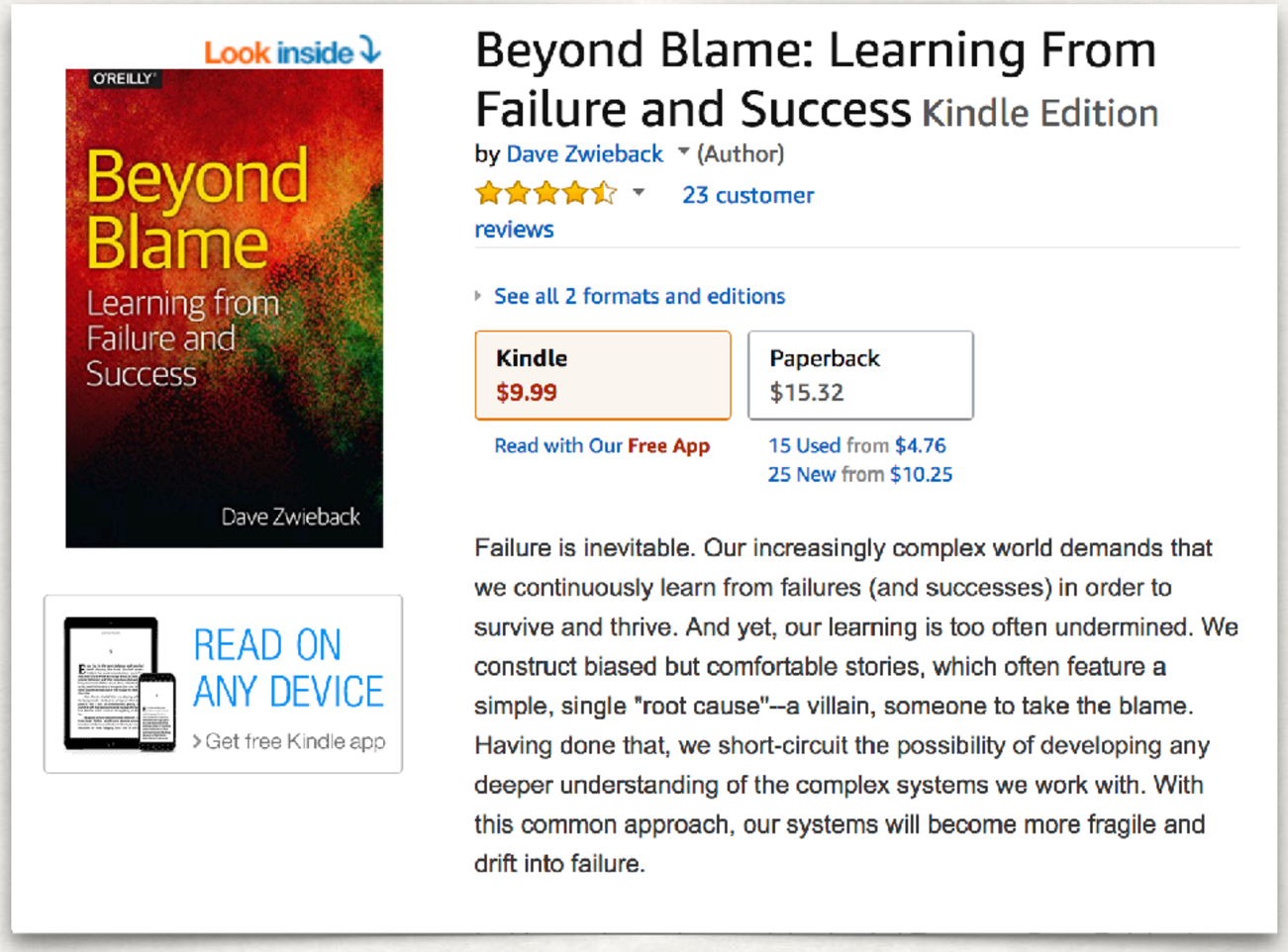


Photo credit: My LISA 2016 talk. It was great. You should watch the video.

5. PERFORM A PROJECT RETROSPECTIVE

- Outline:
  - What went right
  - What went wrong
  - What should we do differently next time
- Benefits:
  - Thank all that are involved.
  - Educate entire company about best practices
- Also called:
  - Learning Review
  - Post mortem
  - Post-mortem
  - Postmortem



I dunno about anybody else, but I really like getting these post-mortem reports. Not only is it **nice to know what happened**, but it's also great to see **how you guys handled it** in the moment and **how you plan to prevent these events** going forward. Really neato. Thanks for the great work :)

—-Anna

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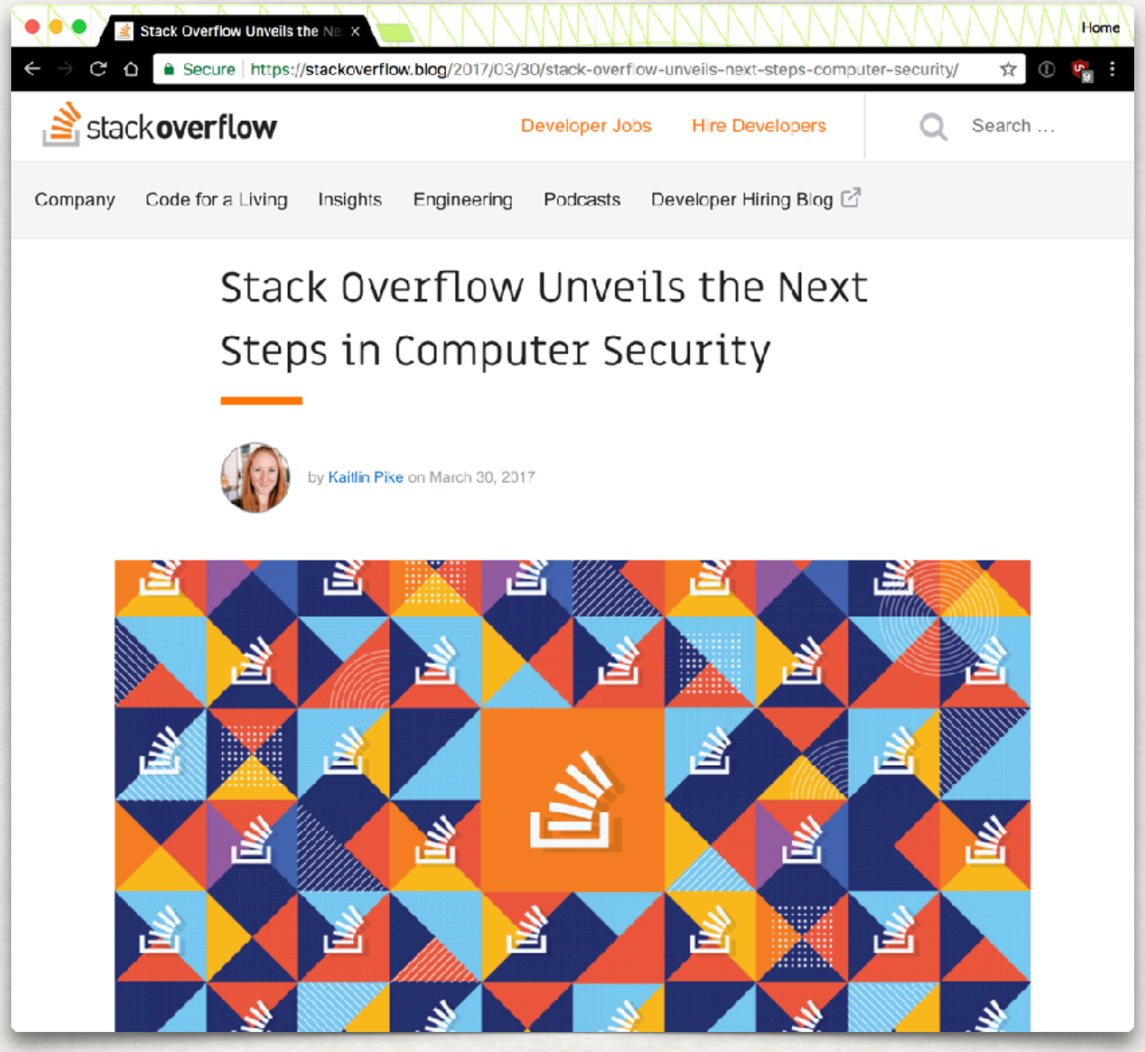
THE LAZY WAY

1. Use someone else's resources.

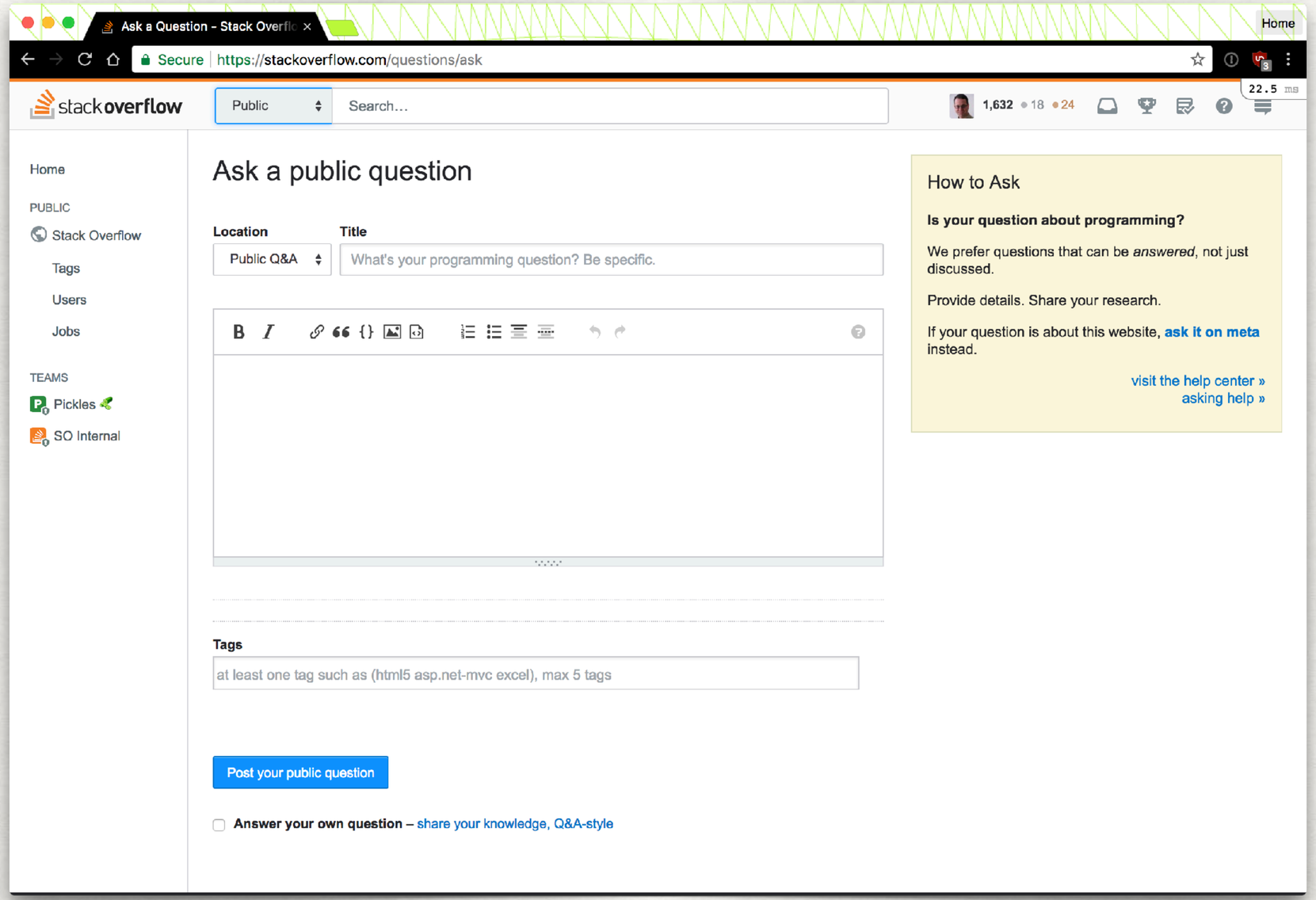
DANCE DANCE AUTHENTICATION

- A blog post and a YouTube video.
- Unlikely to overload YouTube.



2. Creatively describe something that already exists.

STACKOVERFLOW.COM RUBBER DUCKY MODE



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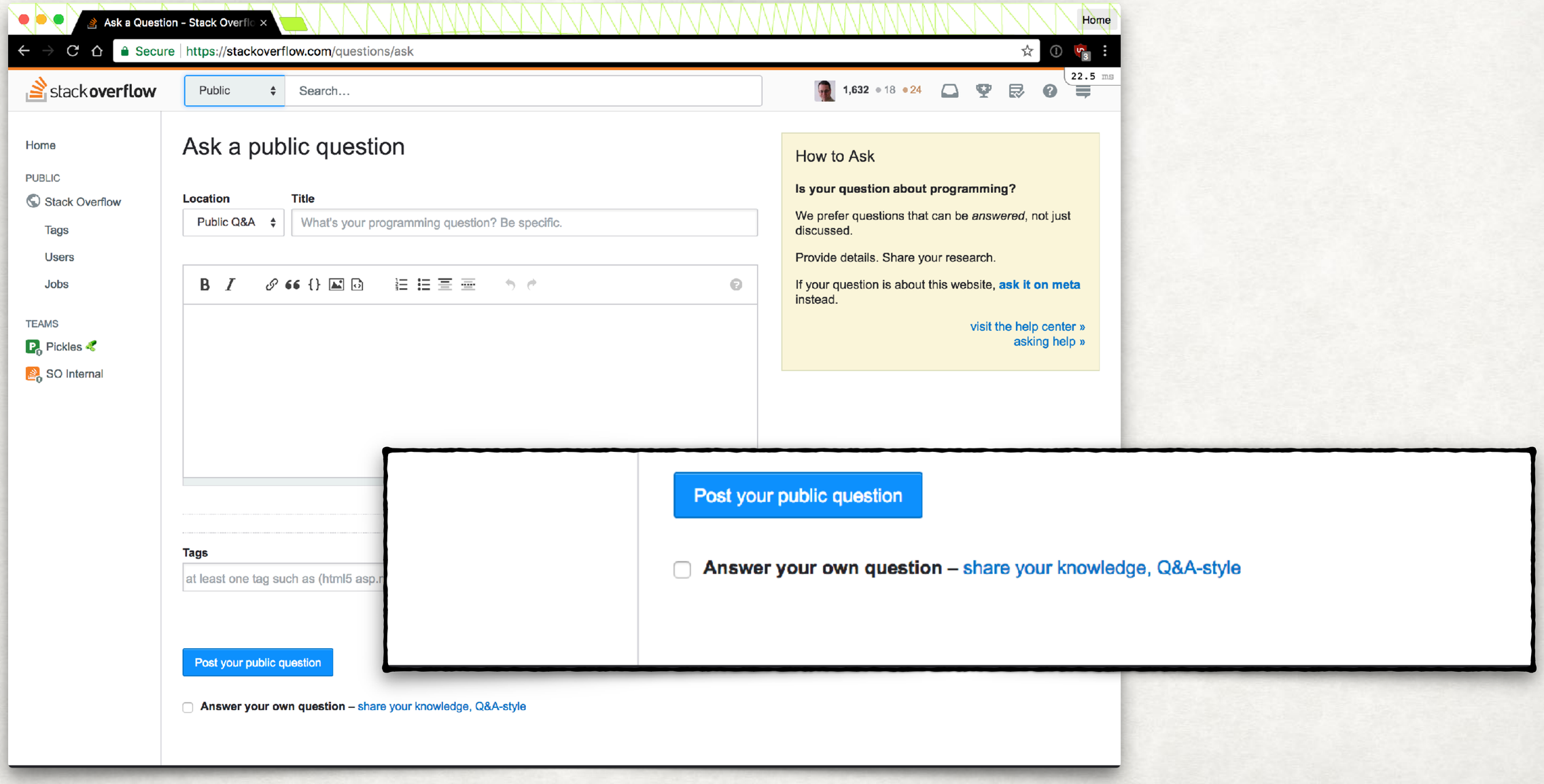

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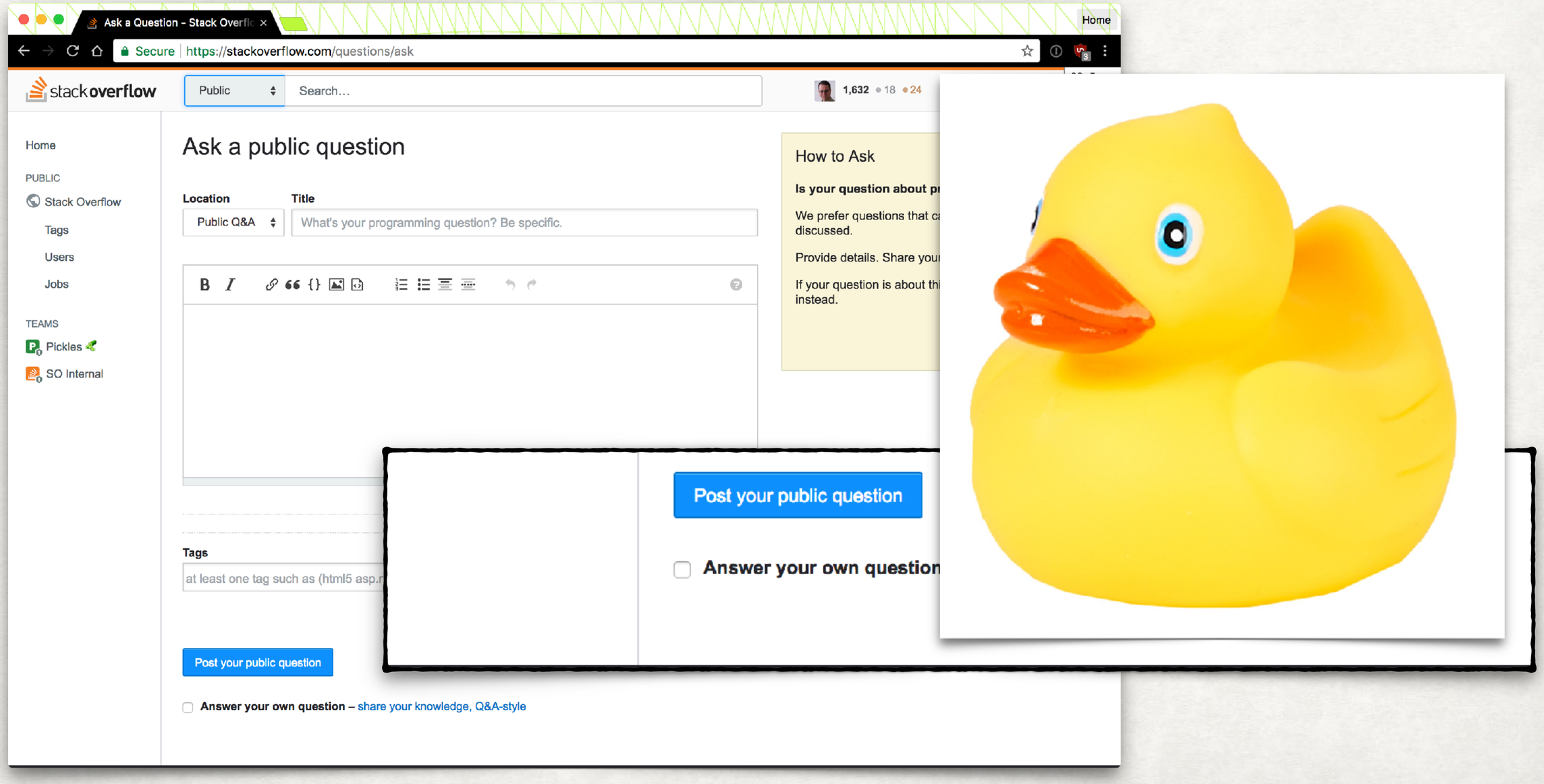

GO 3.0

Finally!

Every damn feature newbies beg for:

- Generics
- Closures
- Modules
- Setters and Getters
- Fully object oriented
- And more!
- And more more

GO 3.0

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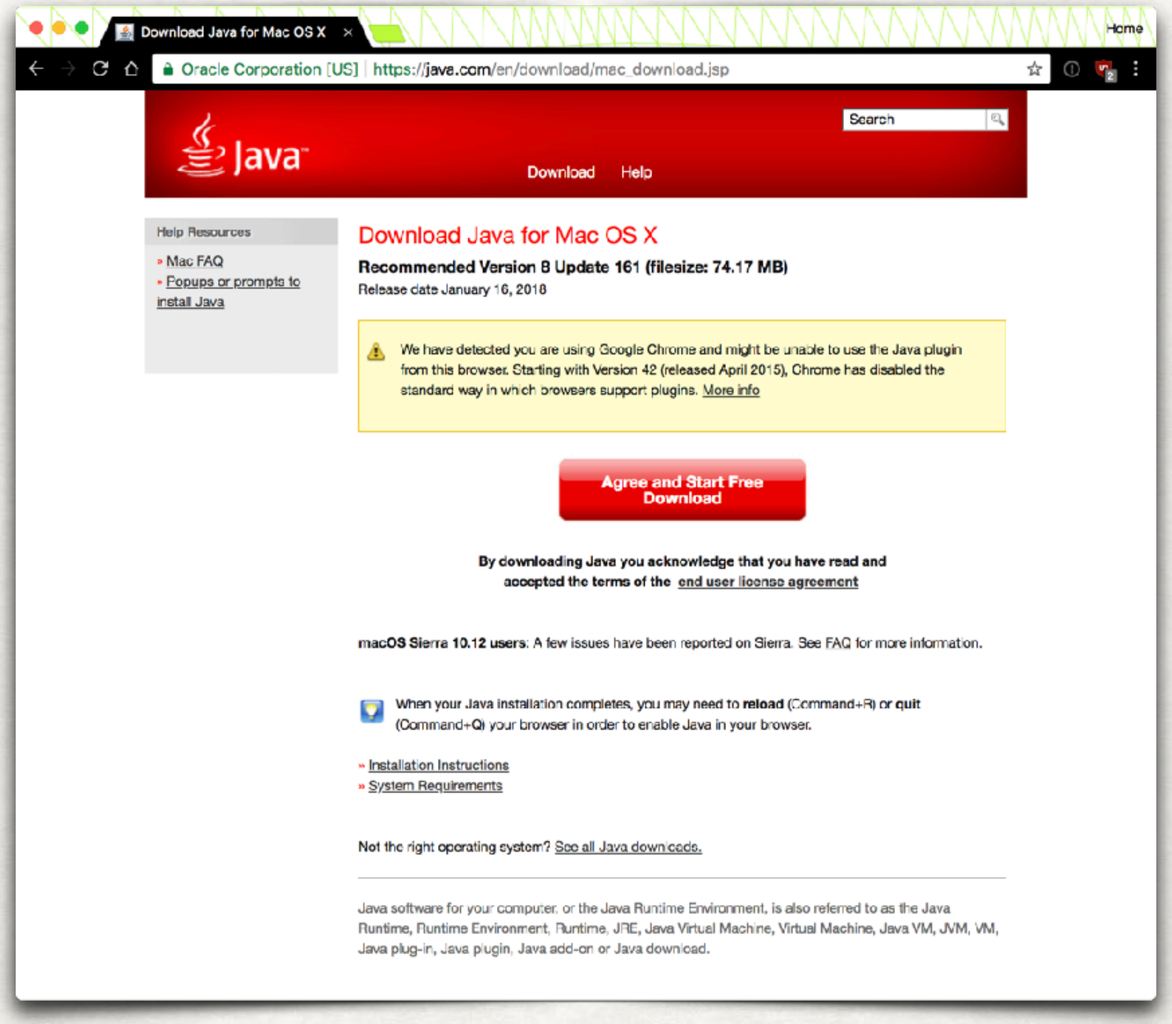
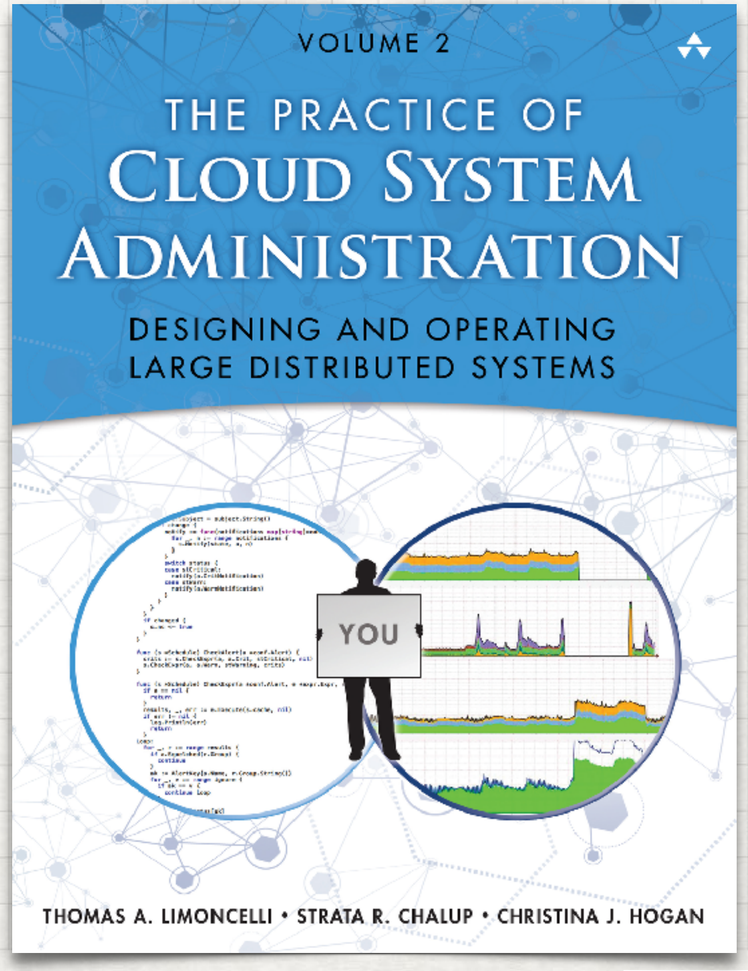


3. Mislead your audience

Tips for...
Launching New Features

Thomas Limoncelli
@YesThatTom



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