

# Operational Excellence in April Fools' Pranks:

**Being Funny Is Serious Work!**

**Thomas Limoncelli  
@YesThatTom**



*Photo Credit: ©iStockphoto.com/katkov*



## 364 days have elapsed – your Site is fully graduated.

2

## Cast your vote: What should your Site do next?

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**

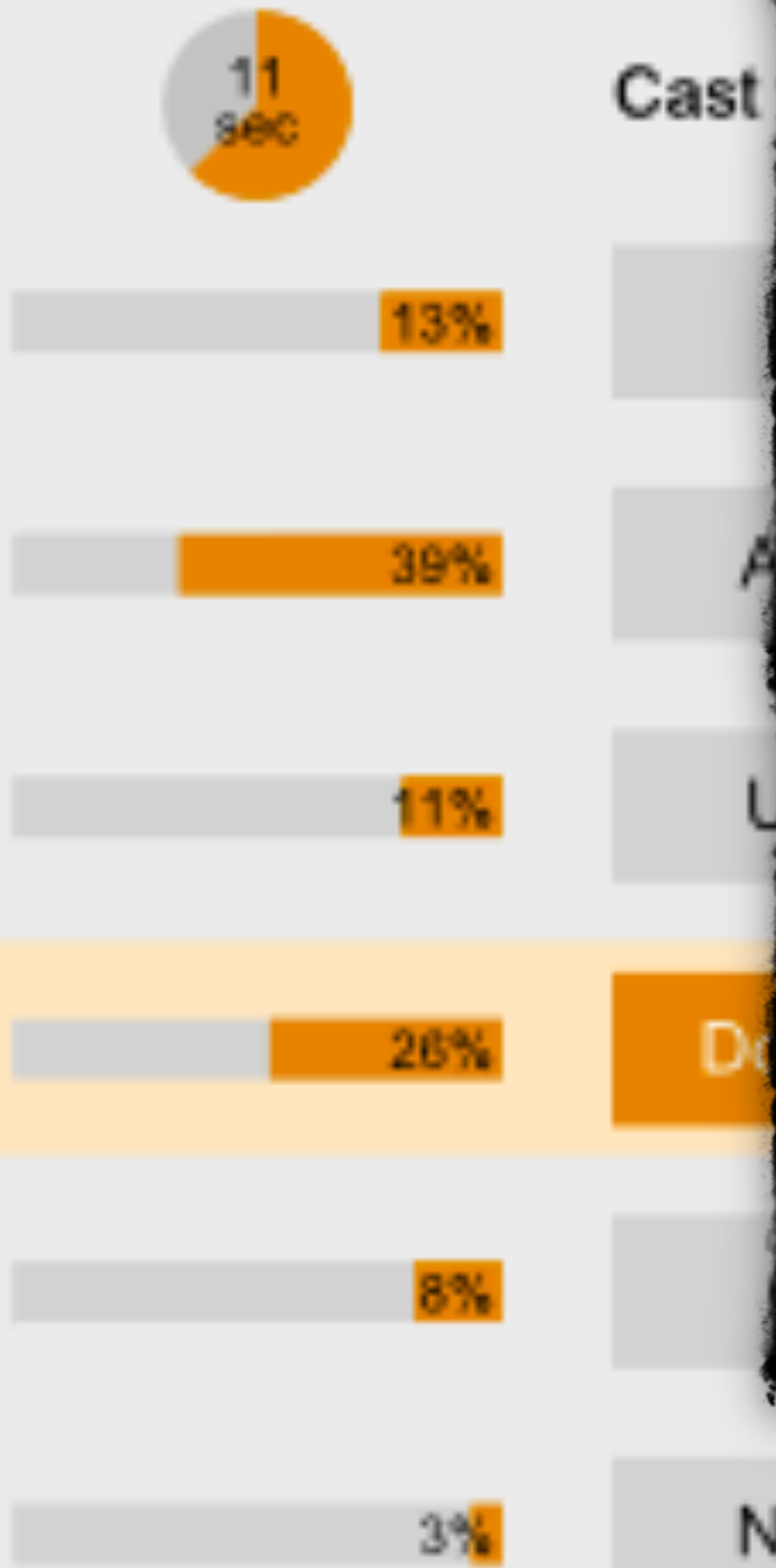
Give up and restart the game with a brand-new Site. This has to be confirmed by a second vote.

**Questions****Answers****Users****Quality****Traffic**



# Day 117 – Launched for 16 days

Progress towards winning the internet



April 1, 2015:  
**10:23 StackEgg launched**  
**13:14 +2:50 Site overloaded!**



Quality



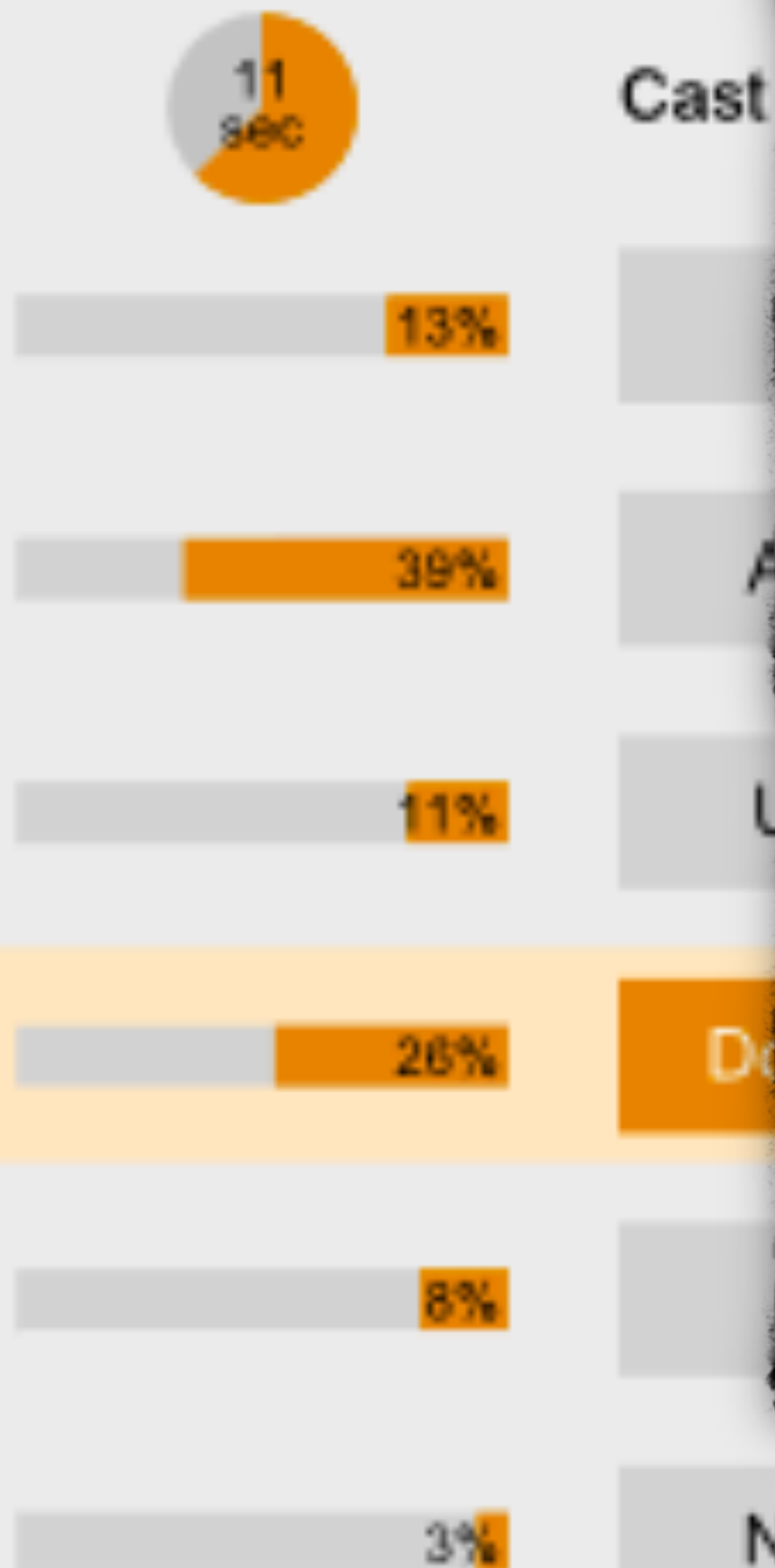
Traffic





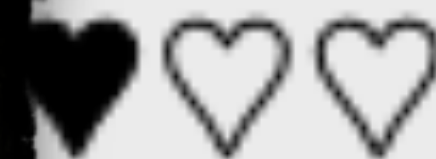
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Quality



Traffic

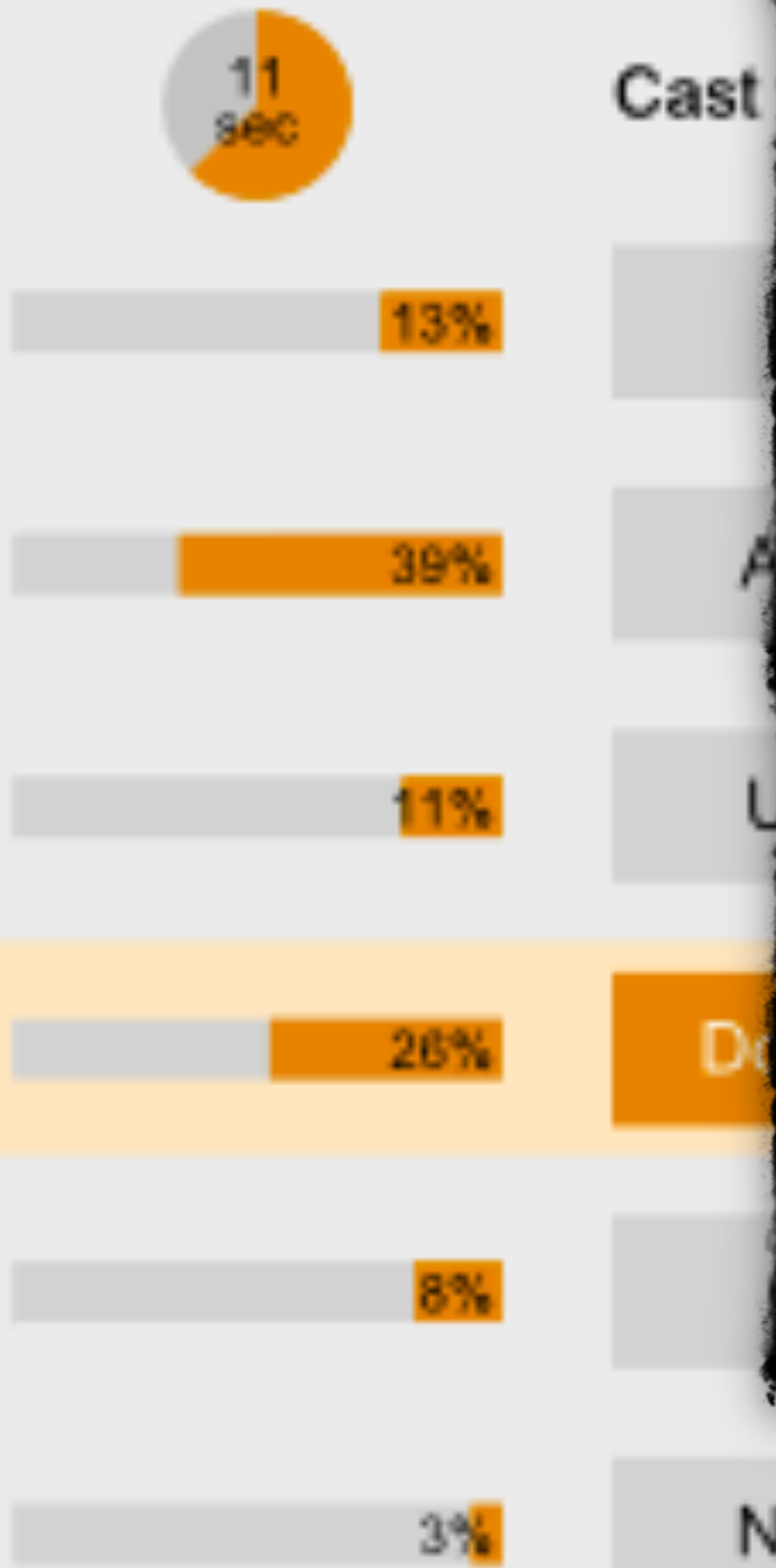


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# Day 117 – Launched for 16 days

Progress towards winning the internet



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**

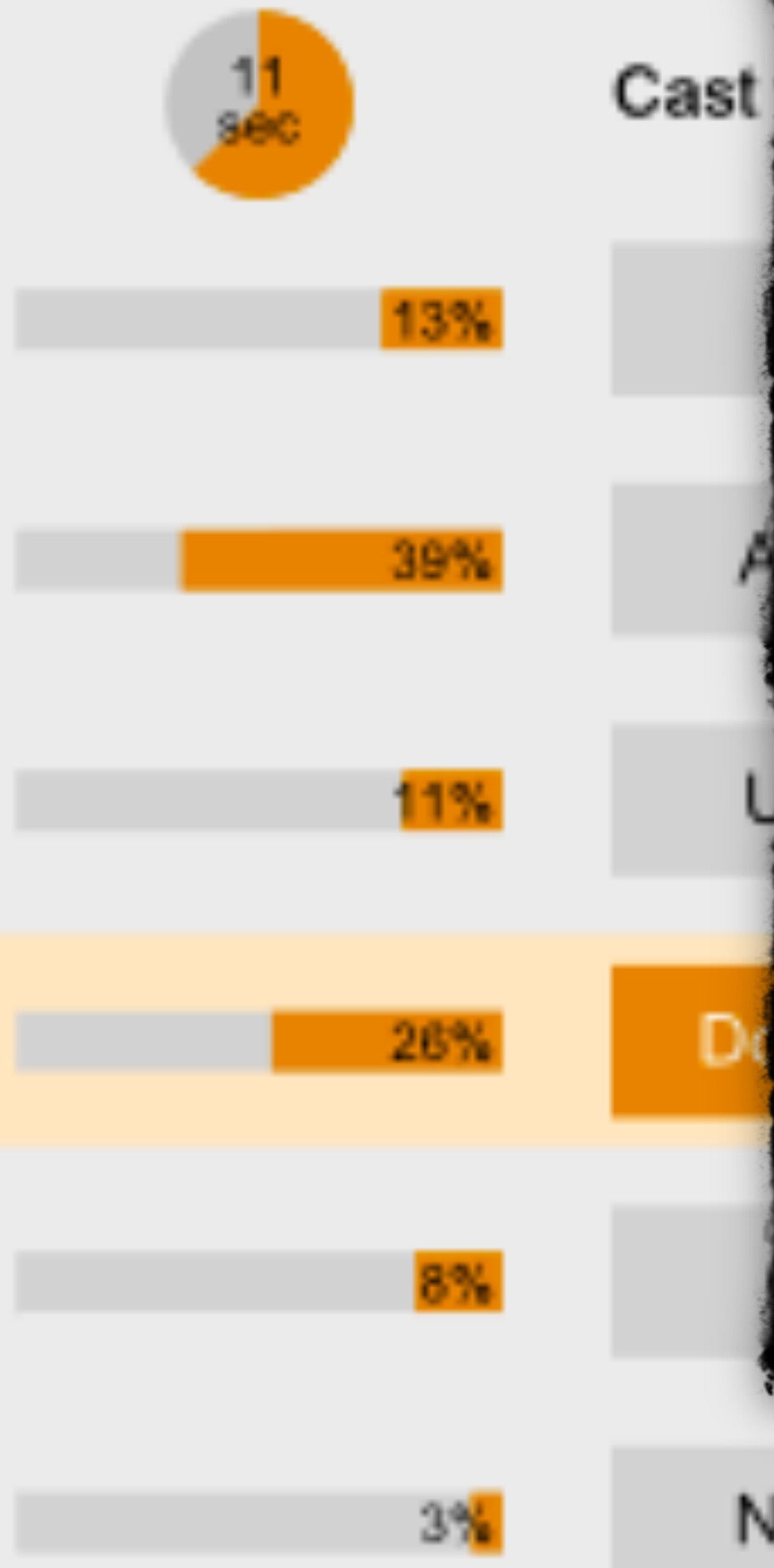
Quality

Traffic



# Day 117 – Launched for 16 days

Progress towards winning the internet



## April 1, 2015:

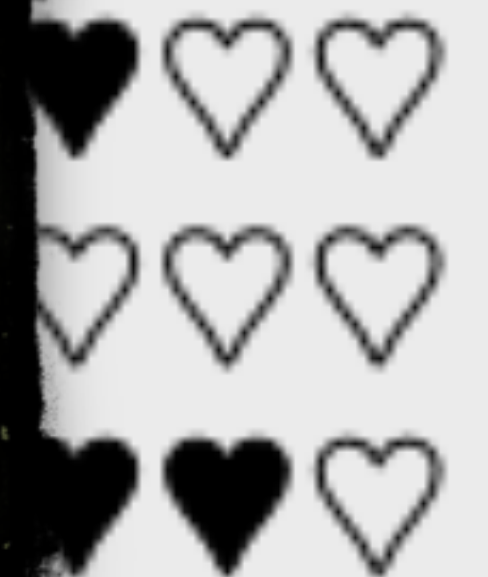
**10:23 StackEgg launched**

**13:14 +2:50 Site overloaded!**

**13:17 +0:03 StackEgg disabled**

**13:47 +0:30 All good**

**14:56 +1:09 Re-launched**



Quality



Traffic



Nothing

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



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@YesThatTom**

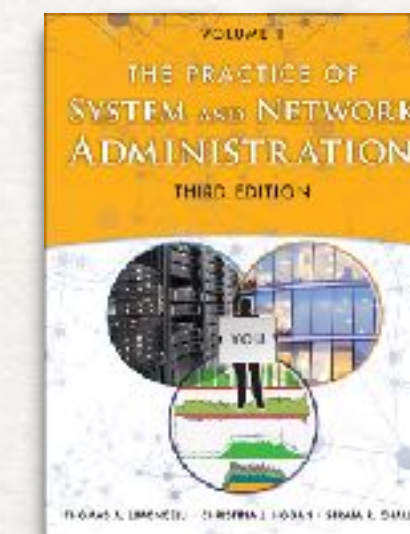
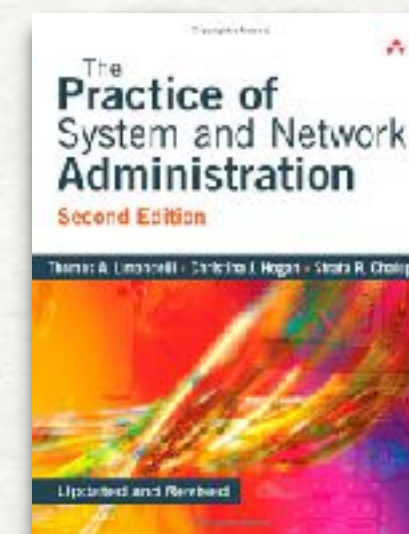
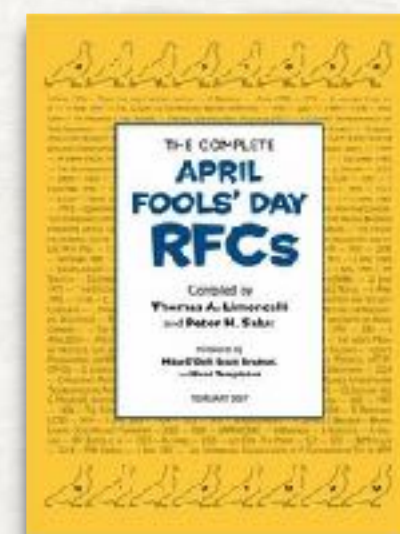
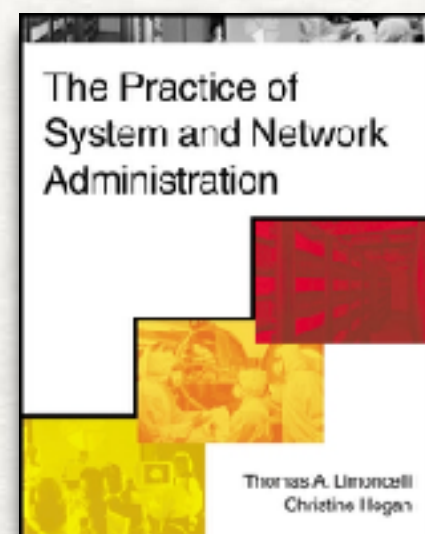


*Photo Credit: ©iStockphoto.com/katkov*



# WHO IS TOM LIMONCELLI?

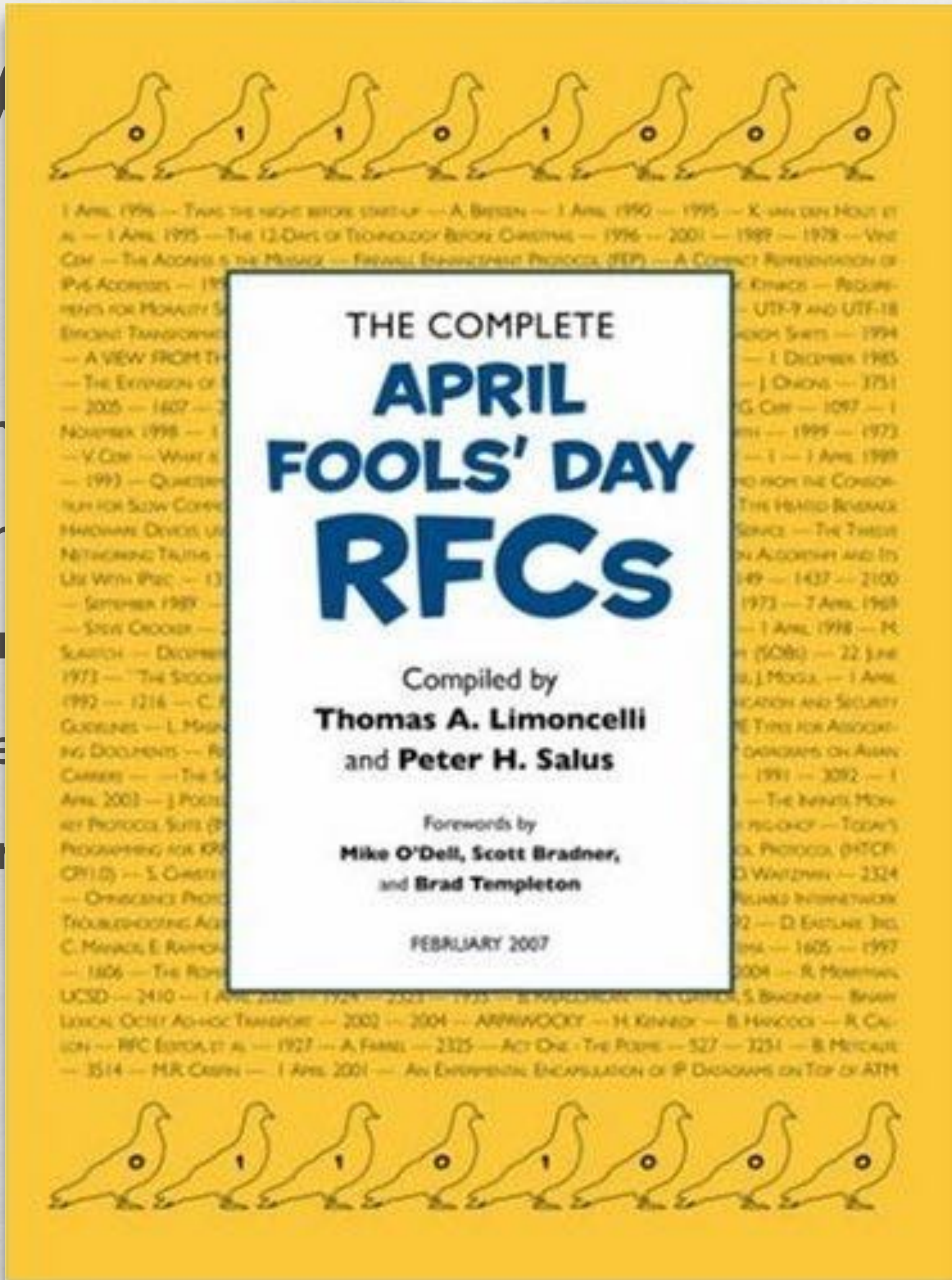
- SRE Manager at Stack Overflow, Inc (NYC)
- Sysadmin since 1988 (Google, AT&T/Bell Labs, Mentor)
- Blog: <https://EverythingSysadmin.com>
- Twitter: @YesThatTom
- Quarterly Column in Queue Magazine: <https://queue.acm.org>
- Author...





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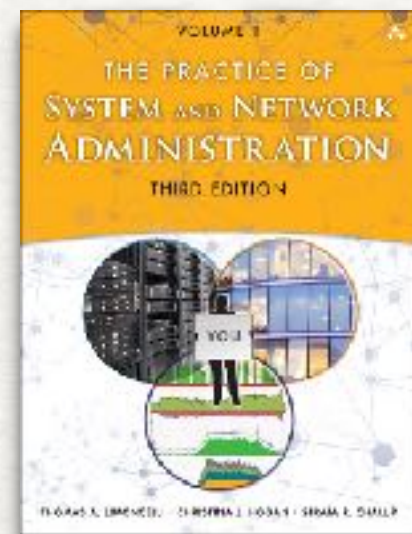
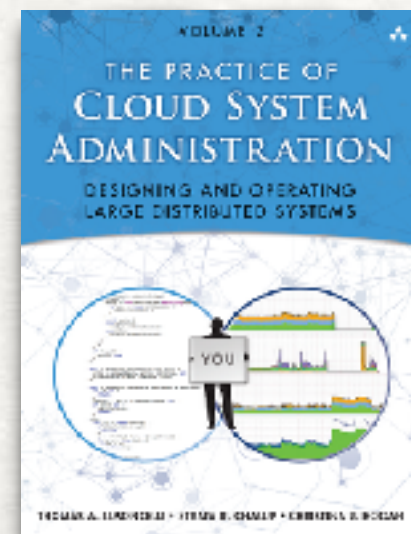
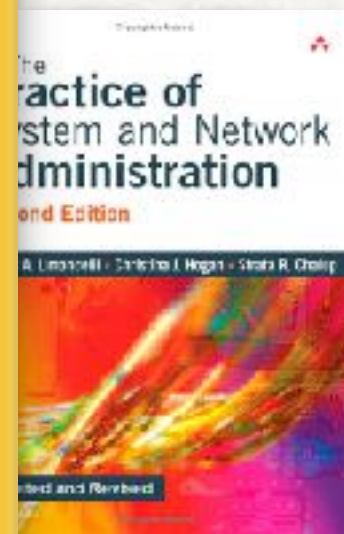
- SRE M
- Sysadm
- Blog: h
- Twitter
- Quarte
- Author



LIMONCELLI?

(abs, Mentor)

os://queue.acm.org





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- SRE M
- Sysadm
- Blog: h
- Twitter
- Quarte
- Author



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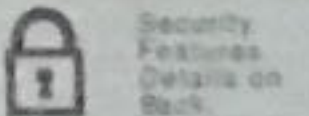
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Thomas Limoncelli

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DOLLARS



Security  
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**WACHOVIA**

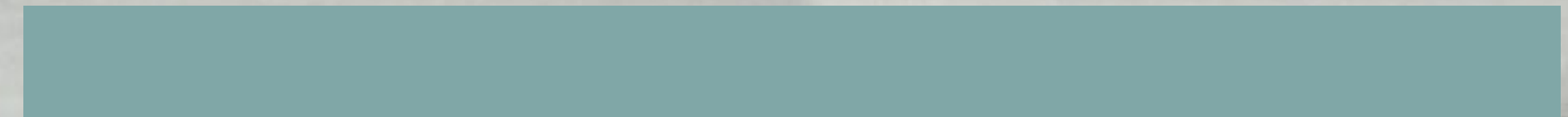
Wachovia Bank, N.A.  
wachovia.com

FOR

2017 Royalties

David Auberg

⑈002106⑈



MP

© HARLAND STYLE XPP

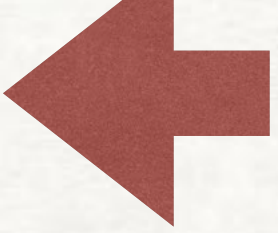


# TALK OVERVIEW

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



# TALK OVERVIEW

- Introduction  You are here
- Something
- Not Something
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- Thing (3 parts)



# WHAT MAKES AN AFP FUNNY?

1. Topical

2. Absurdist





# topical

[**top-i-kuh** l]

Spell

Syllables

Examples

Word Origin

[See more synonyms on Thesaurus.com](#)

adjective

1. pertaining to or dealing with matters of current or local interest:  
*a topical reference.*
2. pertaining to the subject of a discourse, composition, or the like.
3. of a place; local.
4. *Medicine/Medical.* of, relating to, or applied externally to a particular part of the body; local:  
*a topical anesthetic.*

noun

5. *Philately.* any of a collection of different stamps treating the same subject.



CITE

A→あ



- 1 -

Topical: adj.

Pertaining to or dealing with matters of current or local interest





# absurdist

[ab-**sur**-dist, -**zur**-]

Spell

Syllables



CITE

A→あ



Examples

Word Origin

adjective

1. of, relating to, or dealing with absurdism or the **absurd**.

noun

2. an adherent of absurdism, especially a writer whose work is characterized by absurdist ideas.

Origin of absurdist



1950-1955

First recorded in 1950-55; **absurd** + **-ist**

-2-

**Absurdist:**

Not simply silly for silliness' sake.

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





# surprise

[ser-**prahyz**, *suh*-]

Spell

Syllables

Synonyms

Examples

Word Origin

[See more synonyms on Thesaurus.com](#)

verb (used with object), **surprised**, **surprising**.

1. to strike or occur to with a sudden feeling of wonder or astonishment, as through unexpectedness:  
*Her beauty surprised me.*
2. to come upon or discover suddenly and unexpectedly:  
*We surprised the children raiding the cookie jar.*
3. to make an unexpected assault on (an unprepared army, fort, person, etc.).



CITE

A→あ



-3-

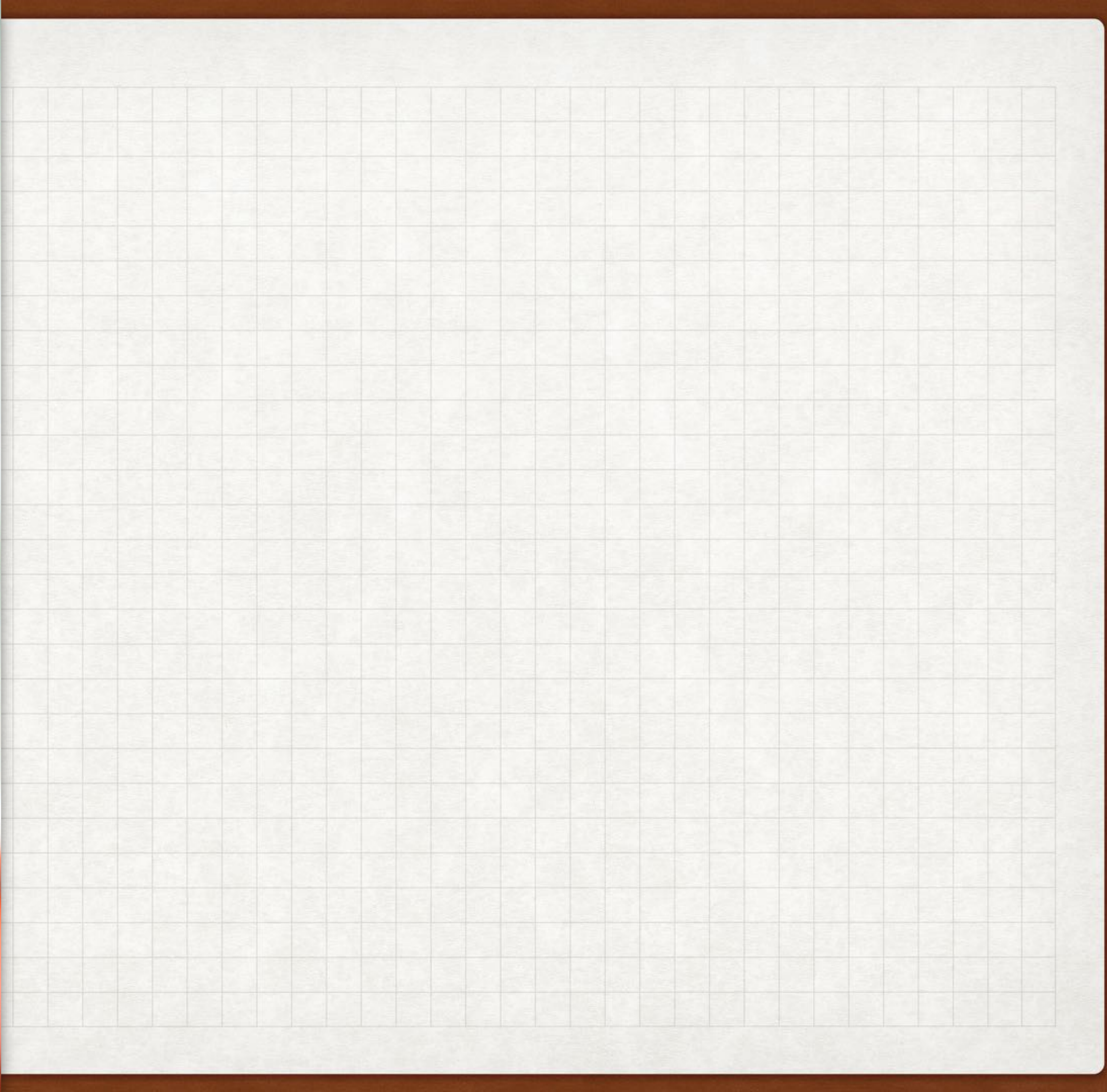
Surprise:

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???





# 2. LOAD TESTING

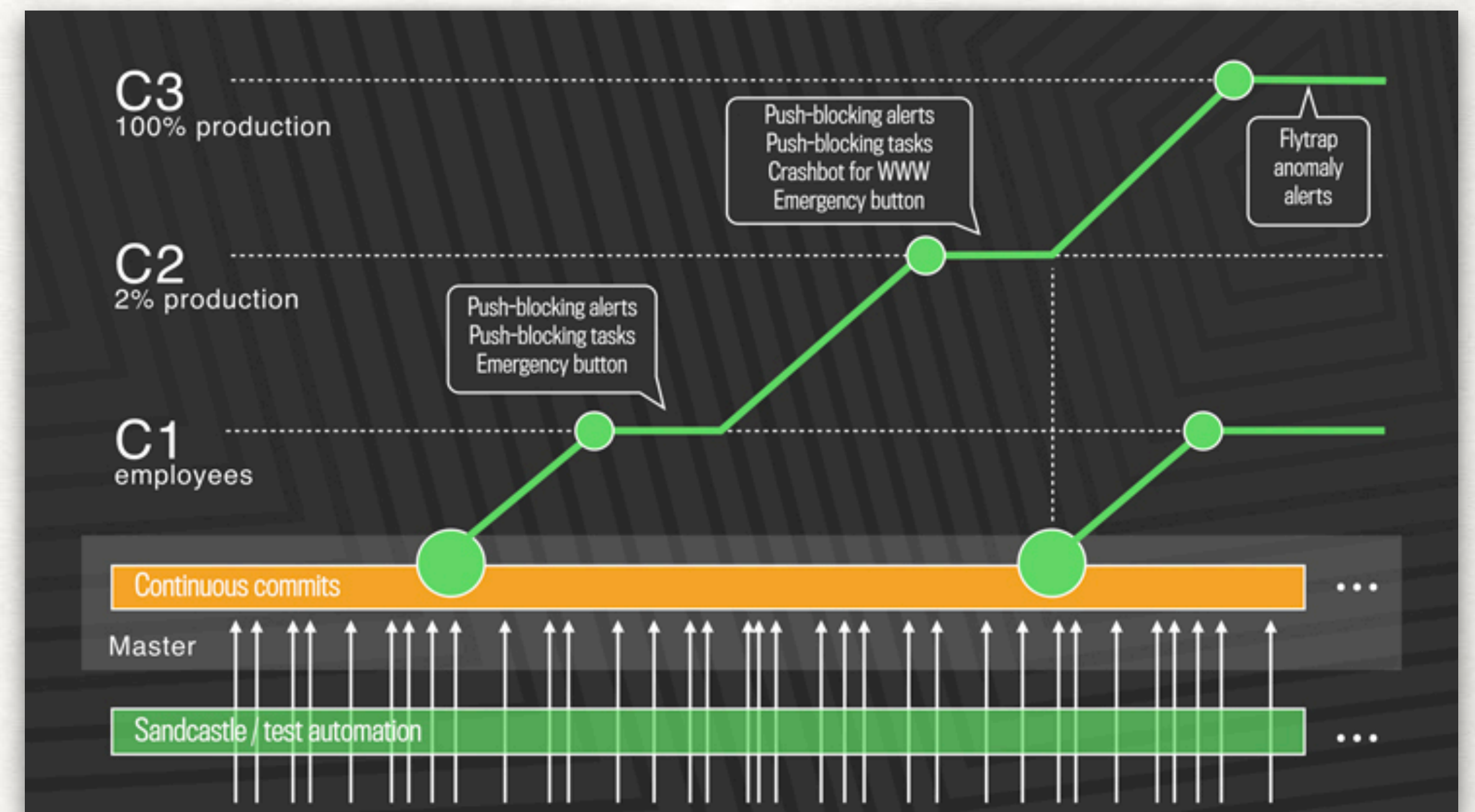
- See how it performs under load.
- A/B test with and without prank.





# 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.





# MORE EXAMPLES

- Good:
  - Before launching IPv6, Google inserted JavaScript to silently test for problems.
- Bad:
  - StackEgg
  - Apple Livestream “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.

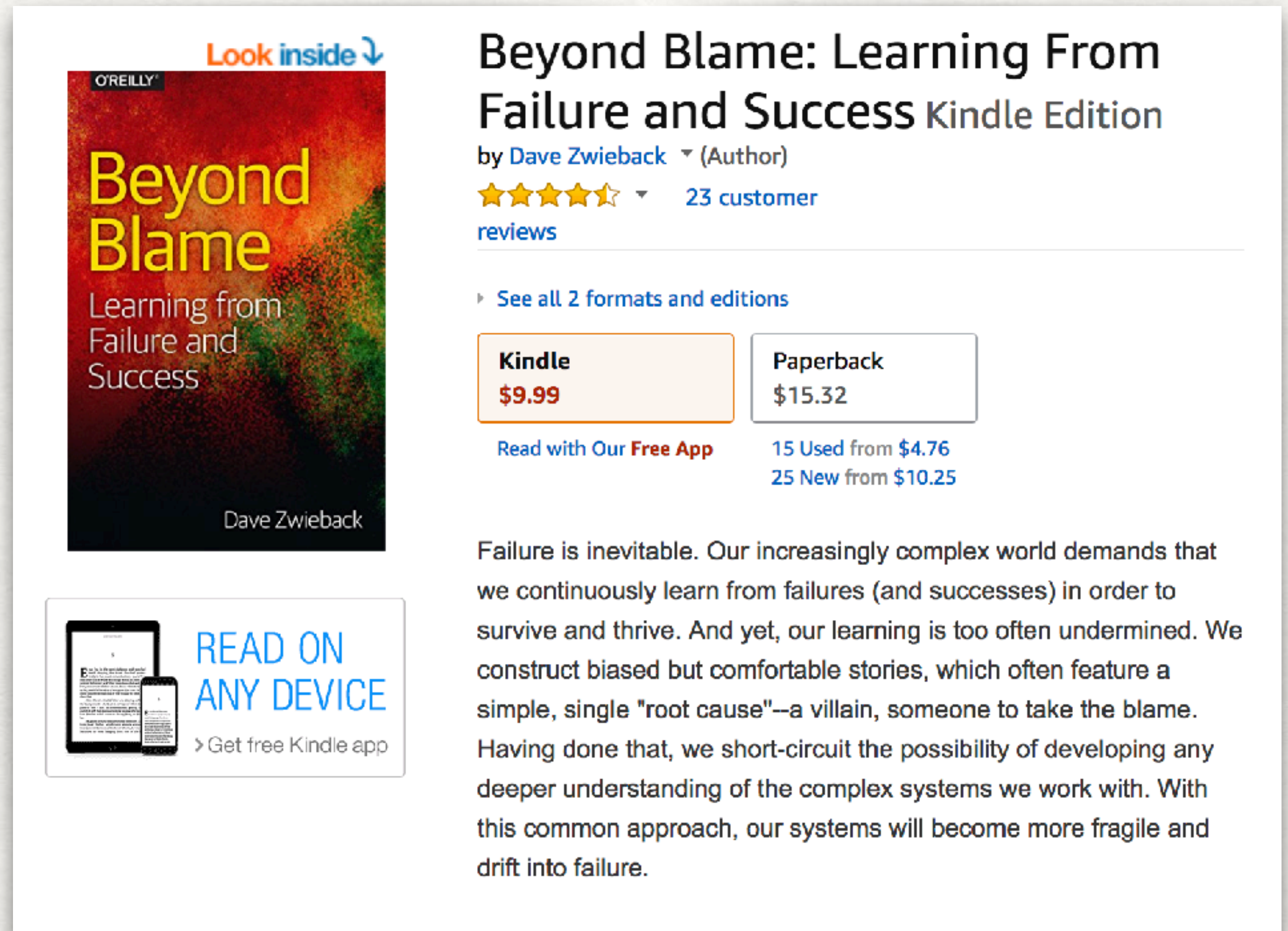


Photo credit: My LISA 2016 talk. It was great. You should watch the video.



# 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



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Failure is inevitable. Our increasingly complex world demands that we continuously learn from failures (and successes) in order to survive and thrive. And yet, our learning is too often undermined. We construct biased but comfortable stories, which often feature a simple, single "root cause"—a villain, someone to take the blame. Having done that, we short-circuit the possibility of developing any deeper understanding of the complex systems we work with. With this common approach, our systems will become more fragile and drift into failure.

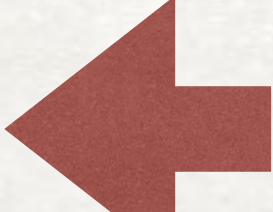


I dunno about anybody else, but I really like getting these post-mortem reports. Not only is it **nice to know what happened**, but it's also great to see **how you guys handled it** in the moment and **how you plan to prevent these events** going forward. Really neat. Thanks for the great work :)

—Anna



# TALK OVERVIEW

- Introduction
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- Top 5:
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  - Thing
  - Thing
  - Thing
- Thing (3 parts)  You are here



**THE LAZY WAY**

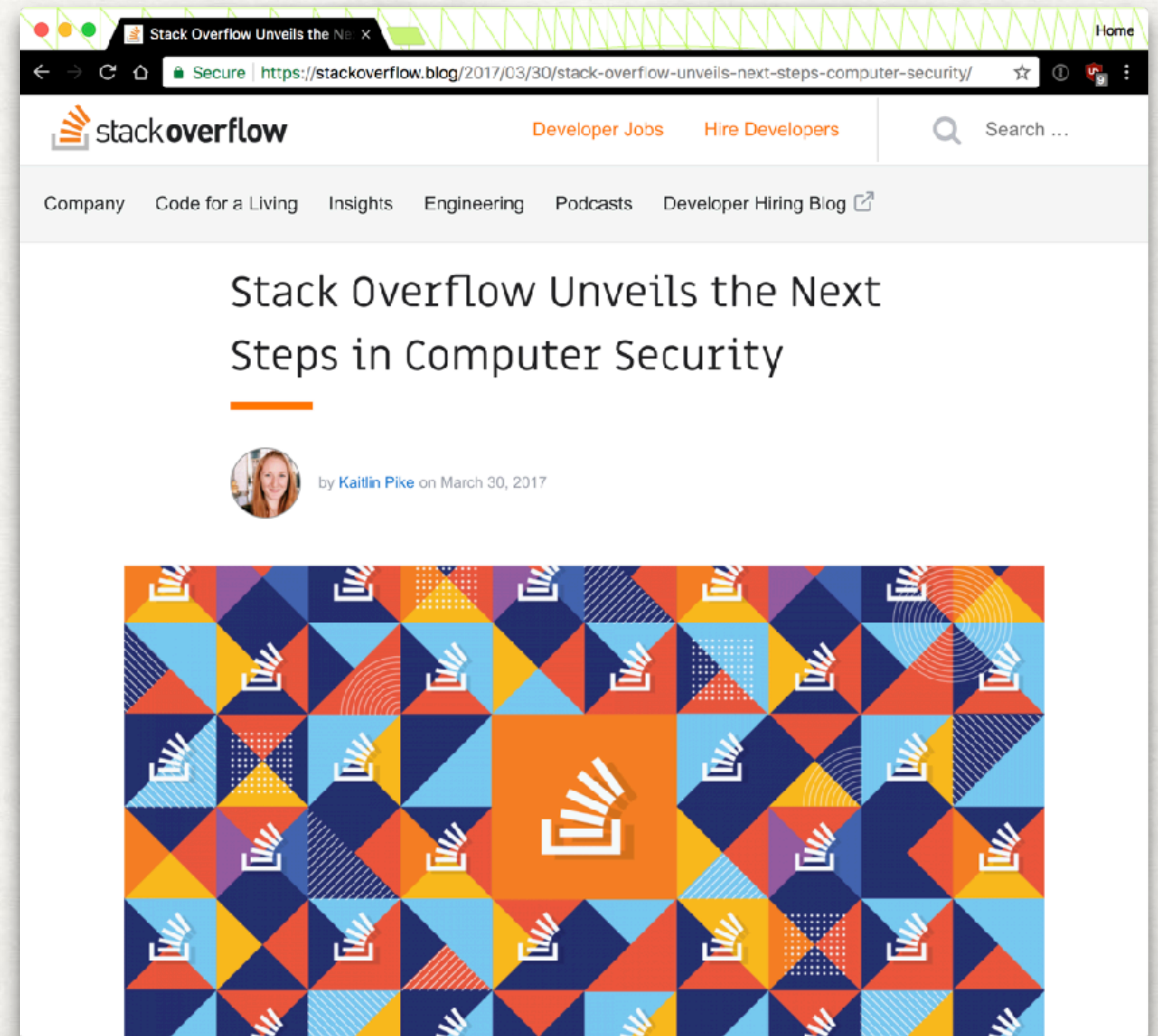


**1. Use someone else's resources.**



# 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

The screenshot shows the Stack Overflow 'Ask a Question' page. The browser's address bar displays 'https://stackoverflow.com/questions/ask'. The page title is 'Ask a Question - Stack Overflow'. The main content area is titled 'Ask a public question'. It features a 'Location' dropdown set to 'Public Q&A' and a 'Title' input field containing the text 'What's your programming question? Be specific.'. Below the title is a rich text editor with a toolbar containing icons for bold, italic, link, quote, code, image, video, list, ordered list, table, and undo. The main text area of the editor is empty. To the right of the editor is a 'Tags' input field with the placeholder text 'at least one tag such as (html5 asp.net-mvc excel), max 5 tags'. At the bottom of the form is a blue button labeled 'Post your public question'. Below the button is a checkbox labeled 'Answer your own question - share your knowledge, Q&A-style'. On the right side of the page, there is a yellow box titled 'How to Ask' with the following text: 'Is your question about programming? We prefer questions that can be answered, not just discussed. Provide details. Share your research. If your question is about this website, ask it on meta instead.' Below this text are two links: 'visit the help center »' and 'asking help »'. The left sidebar contains navigation links for 'Home', 'PUBLIC', 'Stack Overflow', 'Tags', 'Users', 'Jobs', and 'TEAMS' (Pickles, SO Internal). The top right corner shows a user profile with '1,632' reputation, '18' questions, and '24' answers, along with a '22.5 ms' timer.



# STACKOVERFLOW.COM RUBBER DUCKY MODE

The image shows a screenshot of the Stack Overflow 'Ask a Question' page. The browser address bar shows the URL `https://stackoverflow.com/questions/ask`. The page title is 'Ask a public question'. The 'Location' dropdown is set to 'Public Q&A'. The 'Title' field contains the text 'What's your programming question? Be specific.' Below the title field is a rich text editor with various formatting options. To the right of the main form is a yellow box titled 'How to Ask' with instructions on how to ask a question. At the bottom of the page, there is a blue button labeled 'Post your public question' and a checkbox labeled 'Answer your own question – share your knowledge, Q&A-style'. A hand-drawn black box highlights the 'Post your public question' button and the 'Answer your own question' checkbox.

Ask a Question – Stack Overflow

Secure | `https://stackoverflow.com/questions/ask`

stackoverflow Public Search...

Home PUBLIC Stack Overflow Tags Users Jobs TEAMS Pickles SO Internal

## Ask a public question

Location: Public Q&A Title: What's your programming question? Be specific.

**B** *I* [Link] [Quote] [Code] [Image] [Giphy] [List] [Table] [Table] [Table] [Table] [Undo] [Redo] [Help]

Tags: at least one tag such as (html5 asp.r)

**Post your public question**

Answer your own question – share your knowledge, Q&A-style

### How to Ask

**Is your question about programming?**

We prefer questions that can be *answered*, not just discussed.

Provide details. Share your research.

If your question is about this website, [ask it on meta](#) instead.

[visit the help center »](#)  
[asking help »](#)

**Post your public question**

Answer your own question – share your knowledge, Q&A-style



# STACKOVERFLOW.COM RUBBER DUCKY MODE

Ask a Question - Stack Overflow

Secure | <https://stackoverflow.com/questions/ask>

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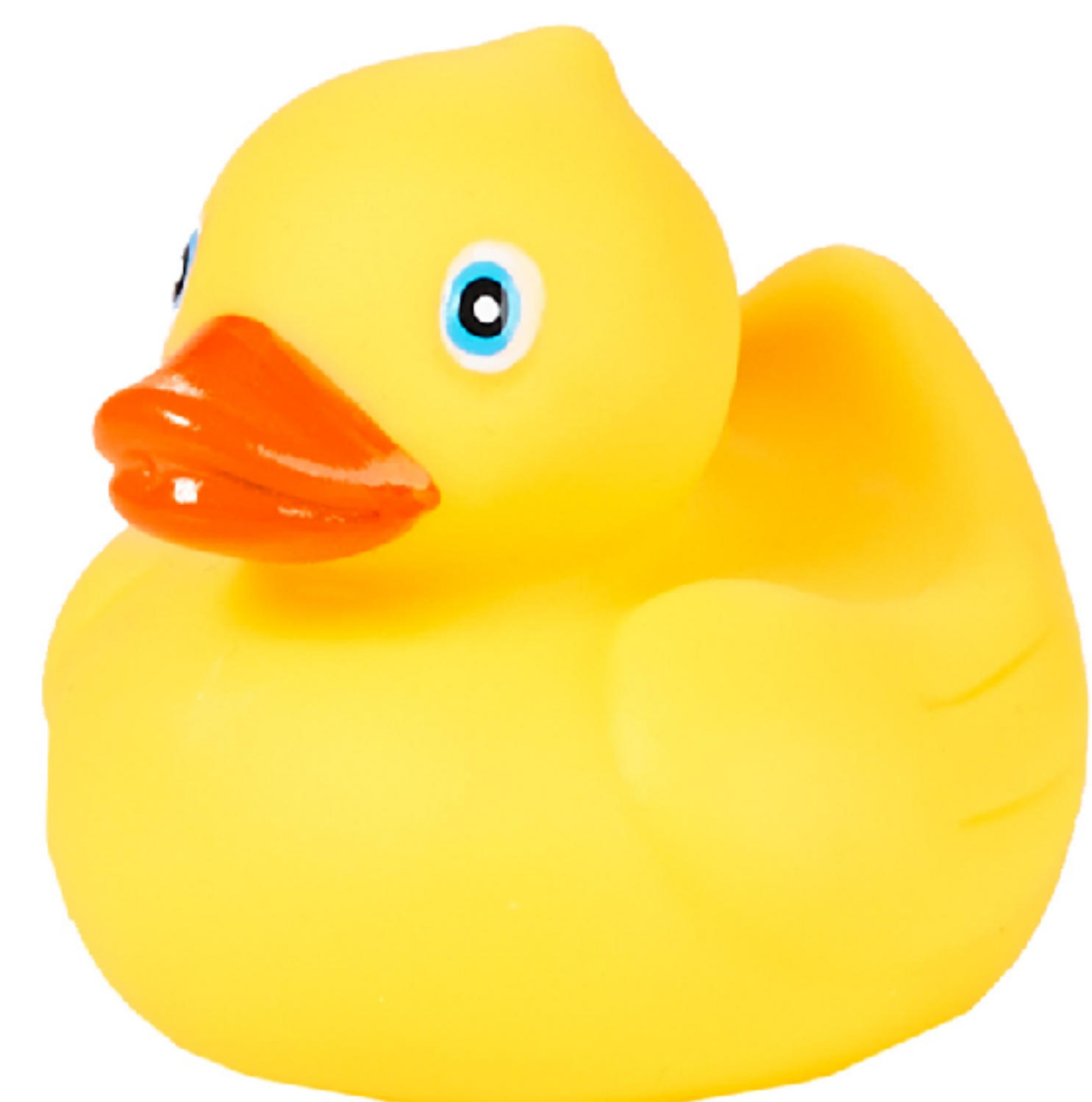
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Answer your own question – share your knowledge, Q&A-style

**Post your public question**

Answer your own question



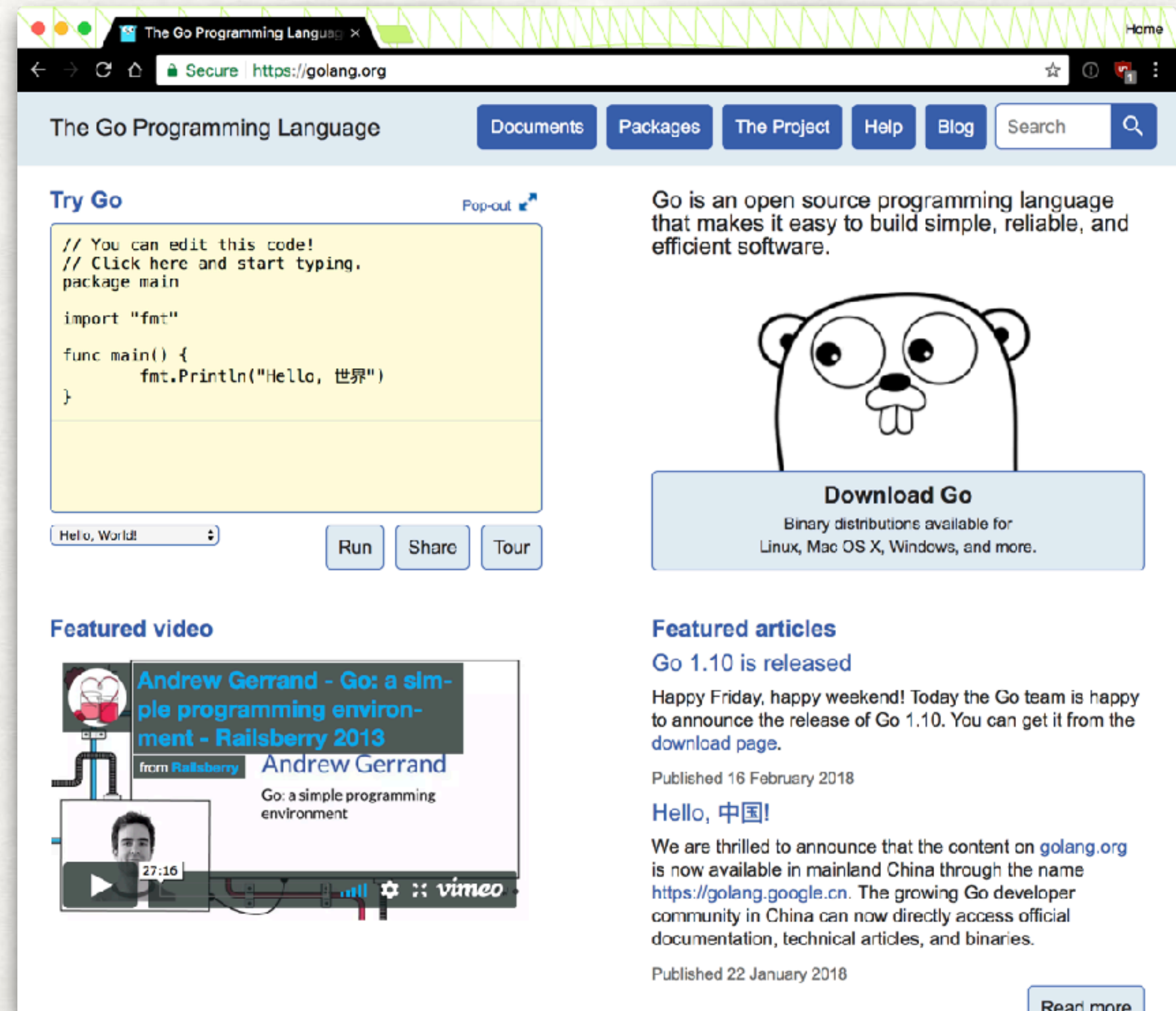


# GO 3.0

*Finally!*

*Every damn feature newbies beg for:*

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



The screenshot shows the Go Programming Language website (golang.org) in a browser. The page features a navigation bar with links for Documents, Packages, The Project, Help, and Blog, along with a search bar. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Try Go:** A code editor with a yellow background containing Go code for a "Hello, World" program. Below the editor is a text input field with "Hello, World!" and buttons for "Run", "Share", and "Tour".
- Download Go:** A blue button with the text "Download Go" and "Binary distributions available for Linux, Mac OS X, Windows, and more."
- Featured video:** A video player showing a video titled "Andrew Gerrand - Go: a simple programming environment - Railsberry 2013" from Railsberry. The video player includes a play button, a progress bar, and a "vimeo" logo.
- Featured articles:** Two articles are listed:
  - Go 1.10 is released:** A short article announcing the release of Go 1.10, published on 16 February 2018.
  - Hello, 中国!** A longer article announcing that the content on golang.org is now available in mainland China through the name https://golang.google.cn, published on 22 January 2018.

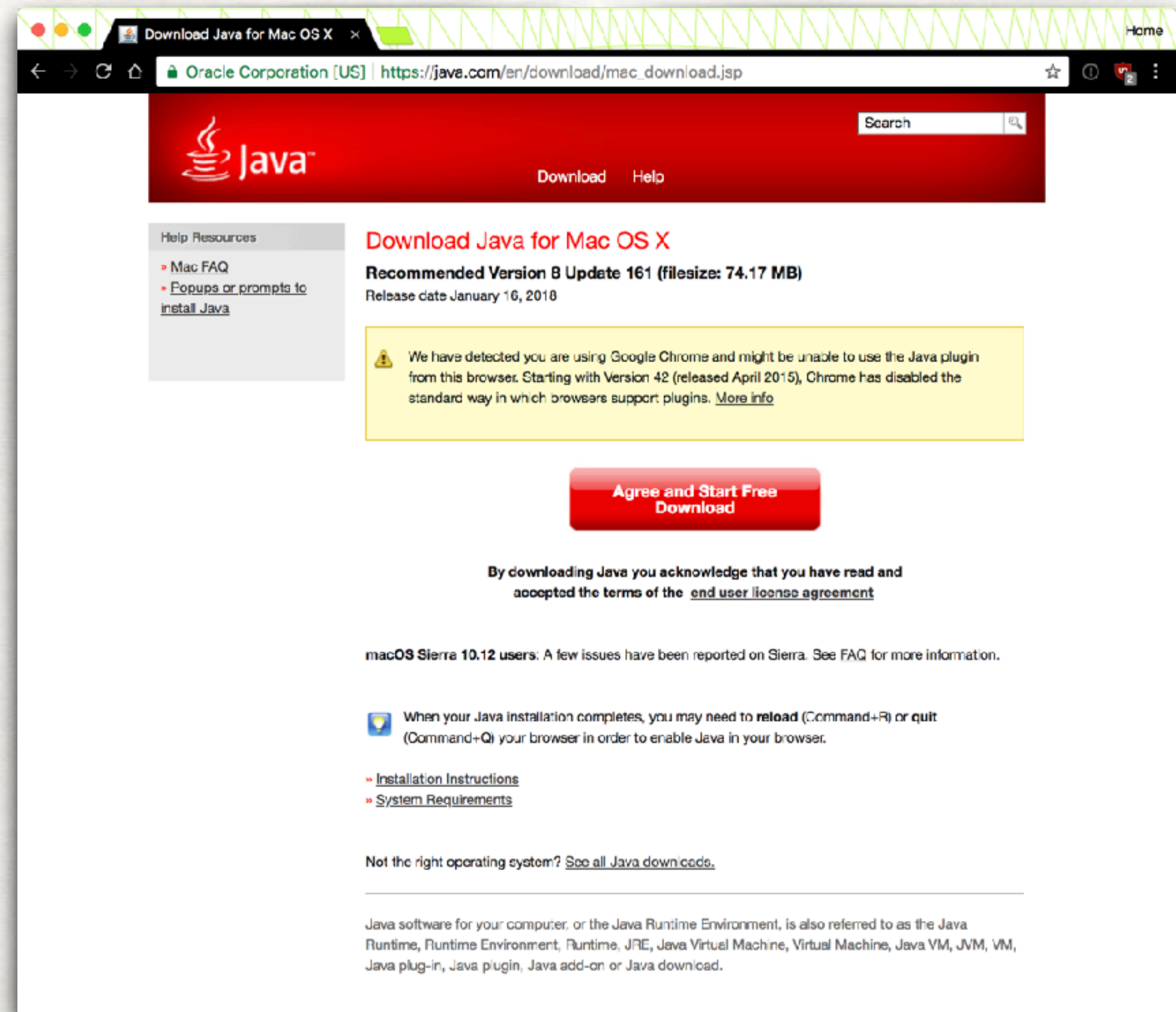


# GO 3.0

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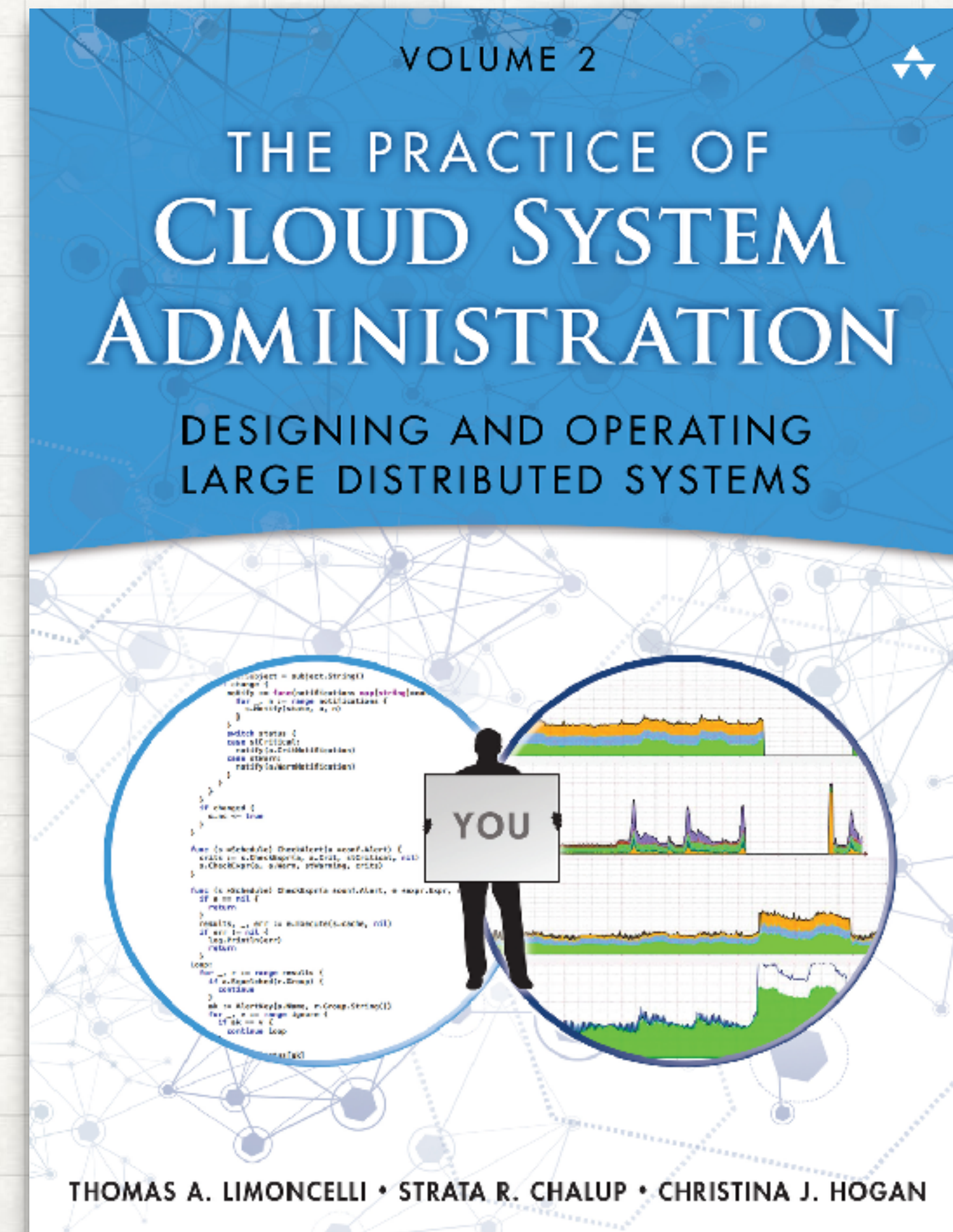


**3. Mislead your audience**



# Tips for... Launching New Features

**Thomas Limoncelli**  
**@YesThatTom**





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*Photo Credit: ©iStockphoto.com/katkov*



# Operational Excellence in April Fools' Pranks:

Being Funny Is Serious Work!

Thomas Limoncelli  
@YesThatTom

Fool you very much!

