

SOFTWARE Development

The People, Products,
and Practices of
Corporate Development

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THE PEOPLE, PRODUCTS, AND PRACTICES AWARDS

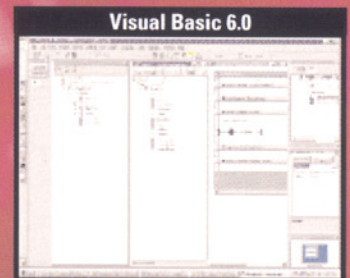
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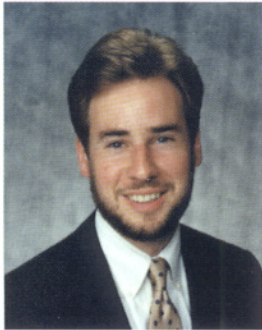
BY BARBARA HANSCOME, JULIE FADDA, AND THERESA GONZALEZ

The way you develop business applications, lead your team, and choose development tools probably has something to do with the people, products, and development practices you've encountered during your career. If you're lucky, you've connected with people whose ideas stretched your own thinking, tools that improved your productivity, and technologies or practices that challenged and enhanced your skills as a software engineer.

While the software development field is huge and rapidly changing, and the skill sets of today's developers have become more wide-ranging, we at *Software Development* wondered if there might be a "collective unconscious" of influential people, products, and practices among our readership. So, we asked you—in part to honor our fifth anniversary of bringing you the people, products, and practices of corporate development, and partly to satisfy our own curiosity. Early in 1998, we posted this question on SD Online: "What people, products, and practices have influenced you most in the past five years?" We received more than 2,000 responses.

As you might suspect, these responses were all over the board, ranging from ActiveX and function points to Dilbert and Jesus Christ. But, in the morass of commentary, a group of influential gurus, tools, and practices emerged. What's most interesting is that these ideas, methods, tools, and practices are still evolving—and still have an influence on applications development today. On the following pages, we pay tribute to the recipients of the People, Products, and Practices Awards, because each has in some way broadened, deepened, or better defined the way *Software Development* readers do their jobs.

PEOPLE



Steve McConnell

"His books have had the single biggest impact on how I work today," is one comment we received regarding Steve McConnell. It sums up the general consensus of those who voted for him. His three titles from Microsoft Press—*Code Complete* (1993), *Rapid Development* (1996), and *Software Project Survival Guide* (1998)—have made a mark in the software development industry as respected and popular reads. Also the editor-in-chief of *IEEE Software* magazine and author of its "Best Practices" column, he definitely has a way with words—and a lot of people are listening.

McConnell is currently the chief software engineer at Construx Software Builders. He spends time leading custom software projects, consulting, and, of course, writing. When asked who or what has influenced *him* the most during the past five years, he mentioned Capers Jones, Lawrence Putnam, and Robert L. Glass. "Two organizations that continue to do excellent work and make a lot of resources available to the public," he continued, "are the Software Engineering Institute and NASA's Software Engineering Lab."

Regarding the next five years, McConnell sees the Year 2000 problem continuing to be a strong influence. Following that, he says, "We'll begin to see more rank-and-file developers moving into Internet programming, and that will substantially change the profile of the typical software development project." Geographically distributed software projects will become more prevalent, with component technology playing a major role. He also predicts a change in Microsoft's dominance over the industry.

You may want to take these points to heart. As Ken LeGro, principle engineer at Kenx Software in Benicia, Calif., commented, McConnell offers "No compromises, no hype. He tells it like it is."



Linus Torvalds

Described by one of our voters as the "pioneer of open source," Linus Torvalds is best known as the creator of Linux. A native of Finland, Torvalds began developing Linux as a 21-year-old student at the University of Helsinki. He has since moved to (where else?) Silicon Valley, where he works at a company called Transmeta and continues to oversee the continued development of Linux.

"A few things have made a big difference to me personally during the past few years," says Torvalds. "I've probably been most strongly influenced simply by the Linux community, and the the strong technical but also social feedback from people around the world."

"To a large degree," he continues, "that kind of user and developer feedback has been the basis for not just the technical side of my work, but has also influenced me on a personal level—I've changed from a shy to a more outgoing person."

When asked about the future, Torvalds said, "I think the software arena is going to mature a lot more over the next five to ten years. There's been this constant evolution of what you can do with computers. While I think there will be a lot more changes, many due to networking, I also think there will be just more of the same; the market will show signs of developing at a less hair-raising pace. I also think the industry will have to adjust to a market where new features are no longer the main selling point of a product."

Torvalds's drive to create a new way to develop software is catching on. As Chris Halsall, a manager of software development at CSP Internet Ltd. in Victoria, B.C., Canada, remarked, "He has shown us that a distributed development model can work to produce superior software." Yes, he has. And who isn't anxious to see what might be up his sleeve next?



Bill Gates

"The name speaks for itself. If it weren't for Bill and his team, would the computer industry be where it is today?" This comment and question, which came from *Software Development* reader Roger Orr, a technical support engineer at Advanced Software Technologies Inc. in Littleton, Colo., is something we can all take seriously. Who *doesn't* know who Bill Gates is and what he has done for software development and the computer industry in general? If it's you, you're definitely reading the wrong magazine.

Co-founder, chairman, and CEO of Microsoft Corp., Gates's company has grown from a three-person show in 1975 to a 27,000 (plus)-employee mega-corporation touting revenues in excess of \$14.4 billion as of June 1998. And no one can argue that Microsoft's products (MS DOS, Word, Excel, Visual Basic, Access, and Windows—just to name a few) haven't made an unbelievable impact on today's world. Additionally, this abundance of development tools and technologies greatly influence and, in some cases, direct the way *Software Development* readers create their applications.

Though Microsoft is often criticized for aggressive industry domination tactics (not to mention its legal disputes with Sun Microsystems and the U.S. Dept. of Justice), you have to admit that Gates can hold his own. "I'm tired of this anti-trust nonsense," says Graham W. Forbes, a software team leader at Daniel Measurement and Control in Houston, Tex. "Let's give Bill credit for what he's done."

In sum, the words of another reader come to mind. Microsoft and Bill Gates certainly signify, for better or for worse, "what true capitalism is."