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State of the Software Industry

You've heard the state of the union but what about the state of the software industry? Maybe we should tap the wit and wisdom of those who founded, fathered, and led this nation. Here is my interview with George Washington, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln.

Q: Gentlemen, what are your impressions of this industry we call software?

George: *Software [Discipline] is the soul of an organization [army]. It makes small numbers formidable, procures success to the weak, and esteem to all.*

Abe: *I could as easily bail out the Potomac River with a teaspoon as attend to all the details of software [the army].*

John: *I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure, that it will cost us to maintain software [this Declaration].*

Q: What are your thoughts on the Microsoft Antitrust Suit?

Thomas: *I am mortified to be told that, in the United States of America, the sale of software [books] can become a subject of inquiry, and criminal inquiry, too.*

Ben: *A nerd [countryman] between two lawyers is like a fish between two cats.*

Q: The Internet revolutionized the way we do business. Why is it so influential?

Thomas: *We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of the Internet [happiness].*

John: *The Internet [Liberty], according to my metaphysics, is a self-determining power in an intellectual agent. It implies thought, choice and power.*

Q: Do you have any advice for those climbing the ladder to CMM level five?

Ben: *Never confuse motion with action.*

George: *I know the CMM [patriotism] exists, and I know it has done much in the present contest. But a great and lasting software organization [war] can never be supported on this principle alone. It must be aided by a prospect of interest, or some reward.*

Ben: *The CMM [U.S. Constitution] doesn't guarantee success [happiness], only the pursuit of it. You have to catch up with it yourself.*

Q: Why is Dilbert the industry's poster boy?

John: *In every society where software [property] exists there will ever be a struggle between management [rich] and engineer [poor].*

Abe: *Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.*

Ben: *To be humble to superiors is duty, to equals courtesy, to inferiors noble.*

Q: Why are so many projects over budget and behind schedule?

Abe: *We must not promise what we ought not, lest we be called on to perform what we cannot.*

Ben: *In short, the way to a successful project [wealth], if you desire it, is as plain as the way to market. It depends chiefly on two words, industry and frugality; that is, waste neither time nor money, but make the best use of both.*

Q: What is your advice for software engineers?

Thomas: *Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances.*

Abe: *Always bear in mind that your own resolution to success is more important than any other one thing.*

John: *La molesse est douce, et sa suite est cruelle.*

[Idleness is sweet, and its consequences are cruel.]

– Gary Petersen, Shim Enterprises

Editor's Note: A continuation of this interview will appear in our May issue.