



Crosstalk

Sponsor	Lt. Col. Joe Jarzombek 801-777-2435 DSN 777-2435 jarzombj@software.hill.af.mil
Publisher	Reuel S. Alder 801-777-2550 DSN 777-2550 publisher@stsc1.hill.af.mil
Editor in Chief	Brent Baxter 801-775-5747 DSN 775-5747 edit_chief@stsc1.hill.af.mil
Managing Editor	Tracy Stauder 801-775-5746 DSN 775-5746 managing_editor@stsc1.hill.af.mil
Senior Editor	Sandi Gaskin 801-777-9722 DSN 777-9722 senior_editor@stsc1.hill.af.mil
Associate Editor	Lorin J. May 801-775-5799 backtalk@stsc1.hill.af.mil
Editorial Assistant	Bonnie May 801-777-8045 editorial_assistant@stsc1.hill.af.mil
Features Coordinator	Denise Sagel 801-775-5555 features@stsc1.hill.af.mil
Customer Service	801-775-5555 custserv@software.hill.af.mil 801-777-8069 DSN 777-8069
Fax	801-777-8069 DSN 777-8069
STSC Online	http://www.stsc.hill.af.mil
CROSSTALK Online	http://www.stsc.hill.af.mil/Crosstalk/crosstalk.html
ESIP Online	http://www.esip.hill.af.mil

Subscriptions: Send correspondence concerning subscriptions and changes of address to the following address:

Ogden ALC/TISE
7278 Fourth Street
Hill AFB, UT 84056-5205

E-mail: custserv@software.hill.af.mil
Voice: 801-775-5555
Fax: 801-777-8069 DSN 777-8069

Editorial Matters: Correspondence concerning *Letters to the Editor* or other editorial matters should be sent to the same address listed above to the attention of *Crosstalk Editor* or send directly to the senior editor via the E-mail address also listed above.

Article Submissions: We welcome articles of interest to the defense software community. Articles must be approved by the *Crosstalk* editorial board prior to publication. Please follow the *Guidelines for Crosstalk Authors*, available upon request. We do not pay for submissions. Articles published in *Crosstalk* remain the property of the authors and may be submitted to other publications.

Reprints and Permissions: Requests for reprints must be requested from the author or the copyright holder. Please coordinate your request with *Crosstalk*.

Trademarks and Endorsements: This DoD journal is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of *Crosstalk* are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or the Software Technology Support Center. All product names referenced in this issue are trademarks of their companies.

Coming Events: We often list conferences, seminars, symposiums, etc., that are of interest to our readers. There is no fee for this service, but we must receive the information at least 90 days before registration. Send an announcement to the *Crosstalk* Editorial Department.

STSC Online Services: STSC On-Line Services can be reached on the Internet. World Wide Web access is at <http://www.stsc.hill.af.mil>. Call 801-777-7026 or DSN 777-7026 for assistance, or E-mail to schreifr@software.hill.af.mil.

Back Issues Available: The STSC sometimes has extra paper copies of back issues of *Crosstalk* available free of charge. If you would like a copy of the printed edition of this or another issue of *Crosstalk*, or would like to subscribe, please contact the customer service address listed above.

The **Software Technology Support Center** was established at Ogden Air Logistics Center (AFMC) by Headquarters U.S. Air Force to help Air Force software organizations identify, evaluate, and adopt technologies that will improve the quality of their software products, their efficiency in producing them, and their ability to accurately predict the cost and schedule of their delivery. *Crosstalk* is assembled, printed, and distributed by the Defense Automated Printing Service, Hill AFB, UT 84056. *Crosstalk* is distributed without charge to individuals actively involved in the defense software development process.

The Key to Effective Writing and Coding: Quality Assurance

Today we are going to talk about the software development industry's number one problem: to many errors. Careless mistakes damage credibility more than you'd imagine. Because I'm constantly reviewing articles written by software people, I have found that, unfortunately, a certain segment of the developer species needs to focus more on the quality ethic.

Don't get me wrong: Most of the article submissions we receive have well-developed, well-presented ideas. But even some of the better ones sometimes have easily avoidable quality problems. Being the perfectionist that I am, I'd like to share some common problems I encounter in some articles, plus corresponding areas that might need improvement in software, such as.

- **They got poor grammar and spelling.** I'd die of embarrassment if someone read my writing before they had been through a spellchecker and grammar checker. (*Don't trust a compiler or a testor to catch every coding and design problem, have someone do peer reviews.*)
- **Sentences are padded.** One of the things that is a good idea to look at is the tendency for some people who are writing articles to use more words than they would need to express a thought that only needs a few words to be properly expressed before it's understood. (*Your code?*)
- **Obfuscation through multifarious convolutions.** Please, eschew any overtly labyrinthine scrutinizations and prolongations. (*Nobody doesn't care for that artsy-fartsy talk.*)
- **There are articles filled with unnecessary and unwanted redundancy.** Redundancy can be a huge, gigantic problem, so don't do it—avoid it wherever possible. Just state your point and move on. If you don't simply state your point and move on, your guilty of being redundant. So I advise against redundancy. (*How tight, condensed, and unrepitive is your design and coding? Or is it redundant, overwrought, and not-to-the-point?*)
- **Sentence fragments.** A big problem. No verb, no sentence. Clear? (*code comments, too.*)
- **Incomplete or poorly defined ideas.** A concept is introduced or given as an example without clearly explaining (*e.g., bandwidth limitations*). And even worse is when you're in the middle of a sentence but it never
- **Unacceptable syntax AND word choices!!** This *REALLY* bugs me! The thing that, really bugs me most about it, is shouldn't these people have taken English in HIGH SCHOOL????!! (*This syntax stuff is NOT C++ complexitiy, guys!!!*) :-)
- **Acronym soup.** An NISS (National Institute of Studying Stuff) study of NATKBBOC (Not All That Knowledgeable But Bordering On Competent) TWRPS (managers) showed SLUD-oriented confusion when TAD (total acronym density) of a document is higher than \$15,977 MSRP (miles per gallon). So just avoid it (IT). (*Bottom line: It is a good idea to KO unnecessary TAD @ any cost ASAP, OK? Actual mileage may vary.*)
- **Being married to your words.** I subscribe to the old saying, "There's more than one way to skin a cat by the horns." Be humble enough to realize there might be a better way to present your work, i.e., mine. Rest assured, if you submit something to the journal, I won't change anything unless there's a really, *really* good reason, e.g., I'm bored. (*Hint: If you really can't stand the idea of having others "improve" your work, it's not hard to weasel your untouched work past the "gatekeepers" until it's too late to change it back. BESIDES, whose going to notice the difference??!*)

— Lorin May

Got an idea for *BACKTALK*? Send an E-mail to backtalk@stsc1.hill.af.mil