

Monday, March 29, 2010

North Group

I found out today that one of the two awful tasks I thought I'd have to do in April was postponed. We don't know when the new date will be. We don't know when the clock will start ticking. All we know is that we're holding off on it until we hear it's time to go - which means we then have one month until showtime. So at least it's not like they'll call us up and be like "Yeah, how's Friday for you? 'Cause we'll be there expecting to rock. See you then!" No, they are obligated to give us a month's warning. Of course, that means we'll be lucky to get two weeks. Anyway, that was nice.

Not much else of note happened today. I'm already planning that I'm going to have to get in a couple of arguments this week. One problem I had was "Missy" sent a meeting invite to an important meeting next week. The only problem is that at least half the people she invited, including me, have a conflict during that time for an equally important meeting that we have every week at that time. I called her up and said I wouldn't be able to make it because of the other meeting. Being as all our calendars are online and available to everyone, I just thought she was being a bitch. When I told her about the conflict she asked when would be a good time. I said she could just check our calendars and then said "OK, and how do I do that?" I started to explain how to hit the three necessary buttons but she blew me off saying she was busy with something else right then. Huh. So if your meeting is that important but you can blow me off - well, OK. Don't expect my help any time soon.

Posted by Kyle at 21:08

Sunday, March 28, 2010

Sky Negotiated

There just isn't much to talk about this time. I mean, other than the fact that April is going to suck for me. It's seriously looking like I'll be doing two major tasks at the same time. Usually, when I do one or the other of those two tasks, I end up working 50 and 60 hour weeks for up to a month. But in April, because our customer is so groovy cool, there's a good chance I'll get to do them both. I told people at work that if this goes down just expect me to cuss a whole lot more in April. On the plus side, I've only got a couple more sessions of my class left. I'm not planning on taking another one until Fall for a couple of reasons. One, I didn't want to take classes in the summer when we do some traveling. Second, I only put in for one class's worth of reimbursement through September. Which means if I take a summer class, then I'll be paying for it out of my own pocket.

Posted by Kyle at 21:31

Wednesday, March 24, 2010

Din Nose

So to finish my story about how last week went down ...

Several varying groups of customers were in over the two days. Customer (C1) sort of reports to C2 who sort of, but doesn't really, report to C3 with C1 & C2 in on Thursday and all three of them there on Friday. We had something like fifteen to twenty people visiting. Add in the ten to fifteen people from our side in the meeting and we had a pretty good crowd.

Thursday we went around and around on a bunch of different topics. We told them how we thought they wanted us to do stuff. You know, saying what was in the signed written document and how we'd make that happen. Then they'd bitch and say that was totally not what they meant at all. "Yeah, we know it says you're supposed to test your code out but we didn't think you'd really try to do that." They even told us not to get too wound up with the written documents - that would be the document(s) we're legally obligated to obey until they give us another document saying we don't have to follow it. Contracts sure are funny that way.

The second day was so much better. We got our presentation going for C3 and about an hour or two in he sort of flipped the fuck out. He stopped the whole meeting and starts chewing out C1 about why things weren't going the way he wanted. No one blamed us and, in fact, we received several compliments. However, C3 stopped the meeting cold and went to have several side sessions - which ended up lasting three hours.

Much later in the day, after C2 & C3 had split, we talked about how things went with C1. Now, this guy saw the events completely differently from anyone else in the room. He said to keep on keepin' on. I was sitting there thinking "Look man, you got your ass chewed all day long. Now I may not know how to set things right but I damned sure know that doing the same things we have been doing is the wrong path. Goes back to that whole 'ass chewed all day long' thing I mentioned." But C1 thought everything was cool and he'd work out the details with C2 and C3 later.

The crazy part is that as I was listening to him talk I actually started to doubt myself about whether or not I actually witnessed an ass-chewing. It was like the crazy was contagious. But C1 kept saying it was cool. So, uh, OK then.

Posted by Kyle at 21:14

Monday, March 22, 2010

Parametric Gravy

This morning I looked up the company that had their sticker on the inside of my garage door (you know, the door that busted last week?). Well, first I looked them up online and didn't see anything about how bad they sucked. Also, they open at 7:00. I called them up, said I had a busted spring on my garage door and wanted to know if they could fix it. The guy said "Oh yeah, I can be out there this morning." I said "Well, uh, that's great. But I'm at work. Could we schedule something for later?" I figured the garage door people would be like the cable company and start in on the "Oh, well, maybe we can be there Friday between 8:00 and noon-ish." Nope, these guys were ready to rock.

I ended up having the guys come out at 3:30 because Sue is usually home by then. I asked if it was one of those deals where they have to come out to take a look then schedule another appointment where they actually fix it. The guy said no, they usually have everything they need right on the truck. As a final follow-up question I asked for an estimate on price. The guy said \$65 for labor plus \$2.25 per inch for the spring. Okaaaaaaaaay. I have no idea how big those springs are. Three feet? Maybe? More than a foot, I know that. Anyway, I figured the whole thing would come in under \$200 - which seemed reasonable. After I hung up, I had to call Sue and say "Uh, hope you were planning on leaving at 3:00 like usual."

Sue said she got home just a couple of minutes before 3:30 and they were sitting in the driveway - though they had only been there for a few minutes. I called her about 4:00 to see how things were going. She said they came in, took a look at it, and said "No problem." The guy also said that it would be better to replace both springs because the good one and the broke one were the same age so it's pretty likely that the other one was on its way out. I said that sounded reasonable and have the guy do it and she said she already had. Whole thing was still under two hundred bucks and (this is the best part) the garage door opened smoothly with a push of the button when I got home.

I was surprised just how happy that made me. Turns out, it really is the little things that can make or break a day. Tomorrow maybe I'll try something minor and see if getting it done makes me happy. Maybe I'll ... uh, mail a letter.

Posted by Kyle at 21:01

Sunday, March 21. 2010

Needed Star

OK, so last week fairly well sucked. We had a big-time customer meeting scheduled for the end of the week so we ended up spending a lot of time getting ready for that.

Wednesday night I came home and as I was pulling into the driveway I hit the garage door opener like usual - but the door didn't open. Well, that happens sometimes. So I hit it again to drop it and once more to open it. It lifted up about two inches and stopped. I kept hitting the button and the door would go up a couple of inches then back down. I called Sue, who was inside the house, from the driveway. I had her come out and see if should could see if there was anything blocking the light sensor, which happens now and then. Nothing. Clean as a whistle. Back and forth, back and forth. I had been at work for ten hours trying to get shit together for the big meeting on Thursday plus do all my regular work so I wasn't in any mood for this. We ended up just popping the emergency release and lifting it manually. Turns out that my garage door is heavy as hell. Anyway, one of the two main springs that actually lifts the door had busted.

I didn't have time to mess with it right then or the next few days. So my garage door is still busted. I'm going to call the, uh, sticker guy tomorrow (the inside of the door has a couple of different stickers on it and one of them is a local number which I'm guessing is the installer).

Sue went back to making dinner while I changed clothes. I was just going to have re-heated leftovers. After I came back into the kitchen, she was ... angry. Upset, at least. Turns out the microwave that came with the house and mounted above the stove broke. You put food in, hit the timer, and the food didn't get hot. Light came on, clock counted down, the turntable turned, the machine made the right noises. But the food was still refrigerator cold. After the garage door thing, she was not in a mood to put up with this. We do have a spare microwave so we used that but it was still a pain in the ass.

Later that evening, I took a shower since I wanted to get in early the next morning, I figured that would save me a half-hour. As I finished shaving, I turned on the cold water and it spit at me and the pressure dropped to a trickle. Given the other things that happened, I was just sure that the water heater had exploded and water was filling the basement. It didn't dawn on me for a bit that the water heater probably wouldn't have dropped only the cold water in the bathroom. I yelled at Sue to check the water heater (it was fine) while I checked the water in the other bathroom (hot and cold both fine in there). Sue checked the kitchen water and it was fine too. Must've just been a little air in the line or something.

And that was just Wednesday evening. Thursday and Friday were not that much better - but that's tomorrow's posting.

Posted by Kyle at 22:38

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Posted by Kyle at 21:38

Monday, March 15, 2010

Experts

I hate the "spring forward" day. Well, the day after technically. It's a lot more dark than usual when you drive in and you feel like you got up an hour earlier. Because you did. To make this day even more special, I was in meetings for all but maybe a couple of hours. We've got a big-time meeting at the end of the week, so we spent all afternoon going through slides. Somewhere around hour three, I just started loosing it. Not going crazy or yelling - falling asleep. I was doing to whole "head slooooooowly rolls backwards, then jerks back forward" for ... uh, awhile. I had to step out for a bit around 4:00 to go to another short meeting and I remember having my head slide back, then jerk forward, then one eye crept open to check my watch, see that it wasn't time for the other meeting yet, glance at the screen, then my head started sliding back again. Repeat this over and over for a good twenty minutes. At least it didn't happen when we were going my stuff. Man, I gotta go to sleep.

Posted by Kyle at 22:47

Experts-alurgy

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Posted by Kyle at 21:47

Wednesday, March 10, 2010

One Gamma Parsley

Last night's class was the first one where it went as bad as I was fearing way back at the start of the class. But we made it all the way to week eight of twelve before that happened, so that's not too bad. We did the normal thing where the prof talked for five minutes then had us split up into groups to talk about the homework. I didn't do the homework this week, which is fine because the homework isn't actually graded or turned in - it's just there to help you study. Turns out that no one else in my group finished the homework either but they, at least, got through most of the homework before bailing on it. Anyway, we went through the homework for awhile and got done well before the time was up. We sat around shooting the breeze for a good ten to 15 minutes.

The class started at 6:00 and we were supposed to be done with the discussion by 6:45. Once the class was re-assembled, the prof started going over the answers. Usually we take a break about 7:00 but not last night. No, he wanted to get through the first question. Yeah, forty-five minutes for just the first question. I figured he forgot about the break and was considering slipping out for a few minutes when he said we'd take the break. After the break he started in on question two. In fact, we spent three hours working through the four questions on the homework. Class is only three hours and twenty minutes long and he usually turns us loose early.

We never even did a single slide of new material. At best we had a "next time on ..." preview-thing. We didn't cover any new material because we spent all three hours screwing around with the damned homework. This was pretty much all due to the questions people were asking. Now, in fairness, we were covering hypothesis testing and that is, generally, the hardest lesson in stats the first time around. For whatever reason, that's the one everyone has trouble with the first time they see it. Sure, there's other things that can cause some hassle but hypothesis tests (confidence intervals, p-values, null hypotheses, etc.) just make people trip over it.

This was the thing I was worried about at the beginning of the class - that we'd lose a lot of class time to people asking stupid questions. However, being as every time I've "learned" hypothesis testing, no matter when or where, we had to stop and review it at least once. So really, it wasn't too far out of line.

On the plus side, my calculator has Minesweeper built-in so I wasn't too bored.

Posted by Kyle at 22:12

Monday, March 8, 2010

Every Never

First day working for New Boss went fine. I mean, I've been doing the job for six months now and I've got a rhythm down so it's not like I didn't know what it was going to be like. I started giving crap to some of the guys about they had to be nice to me because I'm the new guy. Again, same group of people and same job for the last six months - but today I'm the new guy.

I don't know if I mentioned it before, but I'm the fourth person Old Boss has lost in the last month (maybe month-and-a-half, I'm not certain). The first guy split to move to Arizona because he has family back that way. The second guy left because he'd been working with one of the "highly technical, academic-based, not-for-production" groups and he really liked it (technically I think his last day is this week or next, but he turned in his papers some time ago). The third person hasn't been happy on that group for some time (still at entry level after six years and is one of the best people in the company at her job). I was the fourth. I heard today that there's some buzz that Old Boss has some serious issues in his group. When you have a "mass exodus" like that, it tends to get people to asking questions about what the problem is. People like all the other bosses in the area and his boss. I'm wondering if there will be some other "interviews" for me down the road.

How about something ... well, kinda funny? A bunch of very painful animated GIFs. People falling, crashing into things, a dude hitting a landmine (or something) with a sledgehammer. Don't worry - no blood, just a crapload of embarrassment.

Apparently I was a little pissy Saturday night. I was bombing around on the laptop and Sue was watching TV. She was flipping around during a commercial and stopped on Animal Planet. Being in a pissy mood for unknown reasons I said "Can we not watch Animal Planet? I hate every fucking show on there." Sue said "Okaaaaaaaaaaaaay." I asked what that was about. She said "Well, you have never said you didn't like Animal Planet and the words just kind of shocked me." I said "... Well, OK. Yeah, I don't know why but Animal Planet pisses me off every time I've ever seen anything on there. Also, I'm apparently pissy tonight." After that, I decided to take my frustration / pissiness out on the cable company.

I went to their website and wrote a bitchy email about commercials. See, on our HD channels are quieter than our normal channels - but the commercials are twice as loud. So you turn the volume up to actually hear the show and then the commercials come on and it blasts you out. I said something about "Can you people not balance your audio feed?" and "Why should I have to choose between hearing the show I'm actually paying for versus having my ears bleed because the commercials are rattling the windows?" I got a reply back today where some cable minion said they're not allowed to meddle with whatever they get in on the feed and it all meets federal guidelines. I'm thinking I'll start a dialog with him over how he should fix their problems - 'cause I'm sure he's the exact right guy to get the job done and certainly not some random dude who got the shit job of responding to the website complaints.

Posted by Kyle at 22:09

Sunday, March 7, 2010

Ranger Cheek

Tomorrow is my first day with New Boss. I have a standing Monday morning meeting that I run where we go over status and any news. So that's where I'll make the official announcement that I came over to the other side. I'm actually looking forward to it. Hell, I've even been thinking about what joke I'll use ("As of today, I now work for New Boss. To anyone looking forward to getting rid of me, I'm sorry but you'll have to do it the old fashioned way and frame me for murder. ... Yeah, I'm old school"). Makes me think I made the right decision. Either that or I just look forward to change. "Oh hey, we've got a new policy that starts every day with thirty minutes of calisthenics in the parking lot followed by a punch to the throat? Can't wait to get started!"

Other than that, it's been a pretty quiet weekend. Though it did finally get above freezing for a few days. Hell, I can even see more lawn than snow out back now. That's the key date for the spring thaw. It actually came on pretty sudden. Two weeks ago it was cold as ... uh, Iowa in winter. Last week wasn't too bad - we got up near 40 a couple of days but it was below freezing every night. This weekend though it was well above freezing the whole time, even at night, and was pushing 50 during the day. The forecast is calling for it to be above freezing all this week, except for tonight, along with a good chance of rain over the next couple of days. I mean, it is Monday so we've got to have some precipitation - but it's not snow! It'll be cloudy, nasty, swampy, slushy, and wet - but not slick. I'm even thinking about not wearing my big winter coat tomorrow. I have to give that due consideration though because once I put the winter coat away, that's it. I don't go back to the closet. Once in, once out.

Posted by Kyle at 22:03

Thursday, March 4, 2010

Abandoned Week

It was another day with many many many meetings. Unfortunately, I had some other things to attend to as well but I didn't have any time to deal with it. I've been arguing with the Pharmacy since last week and I'm seriously getting to the point where shit needs to get squared away. That's not the kind of thing I could really put off and I couldn't wait until after work. I was able to call in to most of my meetings instead of actually going to them. The upside of that was that I could multi-task throughout the meetings. But ... uh, that didn't work too great.

I can handle doing two things at once pretty well. That's two real things, not trivial things like tying your shoes or cleaning your desk - real things that require some thought. Three things at once and I'm starting to get in over my head. Four things is right out.

From 2:30 - 5:00 I was on a phone call where we were reviewing slides. Part of that meeting was actually seeing the slides so I had the presentation up on my screen. One of the women I worked with sent me an IM during the meeting asking a couple of quick questions. Since the questions were follow-ups to a task she was doing for me, I figured I'd better answer. Then the phone rang. I had called my doc's nurse earlier for help on the Pharmacy situation. She called back to let me know what she had worked out with them and what the doc had said. Again, I figured I'd better answer it. Then the second line on my phone rang and it was Sue - who was actually at the Pharmacy to pick up my meds. So I'm listening to one teleconference, watching a slide presentation, IM'ing a lady at work, talking the nurse on my cell phone, and Sue's calling me at my desk phone - simultaneously.

I said "Aw, fuck!" The only issue with that is ... I have no idea which phone was active. So I either told a room full of program leadership "Aw, fuck!" or I told my doc's nurse "Aw, fuck!". Which means tomorrow I have to ask some odd and possibly embarrassing questions. "Hey New Boss. So, yeah, yesterday. When I was on that teleconference and you were on the other end. Did, uh ... did I happen to say something like 'Aw, fuck!?' ... Why? Oh, no reason." And if he says no, then I have to call the nurse and apologize for randomly shouting cuss words at her in the middle of a conversation. Too bad she's not treating me for Tourette's Syndrome.

Posted by Kyle at 21:48

Wednesday, March 3, 2010

Central Power

My official transfer date, from Old Boss to New Boss, will be first thing Monday morning. The paperwork went through quite a bit faster than I was expecting. I'm also allowed to go public with it at work since we're just waiting out the clock now. I'm torn on that though. I could go ahead and let people know because, honestly, I'm about to bust with keeping my mouth shut. On the other hand, I could wait until the regular meeting Monday morning and just drop a bomb on everyone all at once. I think that would be damned entertaining. To me at least. I mean, it doesn't take a lot to impress me. Anyway, I'm still trying to decide which way to go on it. I'd say there's a good 70% to 80% chance that I won't be able to hold out until Monday.

There's a movement afoot to name the next SI prefix as "hella". So you've got mega, giga, tera, peta, exa, zetta, yotta, and hella. One hellawatt would be 10^{27} watts. That's a helluva lot of watts. The other prefixes are all some obscure Greek or Latin thing and they're all based on words that mean, basically, "really big". But "hella" would be a modern all-American prefix. I'd love to see a serious technical article talking about hellagrams or hellajoules. I'd love to buy a hard drive that held a hellabyte. The only downside to this for me is that I think the movement started on Facebook. Sure, it was a real scientist that started it but still - Facebook.

Posted by Kyle at 22:42

Monday, March 1. 2010

Back Bucks

New Boss, Old Boss, and their boss had a meeting specifically about me this afternoon. I had an unrelated meeting with New Boss right before that and he mentioned it to me. I looked up Old Boss's calendar and it said something about "addressing the Kyle situation". Which I thought was totally awesome. When it was over, the deal was settled. We have to put the paperwork through yet but that's just a formality. It shouldn't take too long for that to get squared away. The important thing I got out of it is that Old Boss isn't going to make any static over this. I'm still missing some details, like if I'll still have to put in some time on Old Boss's programs (I suspect "yes" but don't know what the numbers will be), but I think we can get on the same page. Or, for all I know, they've already made the deals and I just haven't heard the details yet. So we'll see how that all works out.

Friday, when we got home, there was a message from the power company saying that parts of town would be without power around 5:30 Monday morning. You know, just a heads up. They didn't specifically say that we would be without power. Or that our neighborhood would have an outage. We inferred that we'd have an "interruption in service" because they actually called us to give us a heads up. I would like to meet the asshole who decided that having a ten minute outage Monday morning was a good idea. Should we do this on a Saturday when most/many people can sleep in and it doesn't matter if the alarm clock is all screwed up? Nah. Should they do it later in the week when people are back in the routine of getting up to go to work or school? Nope. Should they do it in the early afternoon when most people aren't even home and don't care? No way. No - we'll cut power to half the freakin' city right before everyone's alarm clock is going to go off. Awesome idea guys. Tell you what, maybe next time I'll swing over to your house and punch you in the balls first thing Monday morning. Deal?

Posted by Kyle at 21:35