

# Avoiding Remorse: Buying IT for the Right Reasons

## I. Sad Stories

### Sad Story #1

#### New site looked cool

##### *All about ostriches*



Welcome,  
dear.

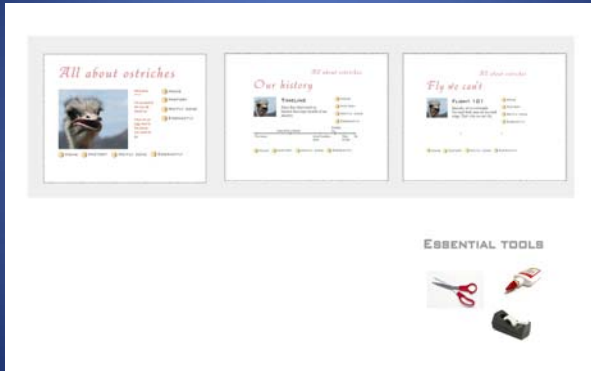
I'm excited to  
tell you all  
about us.

Click on an  
egg next to  
the place  
you want to  
go.

- HOME
- HISTORY
- NO-FLY ZONE
- EGGSACTLY

● HOME ● HISTORY ● NO-FLY ZONE ● EGGSACTLY

But every page was loaded with images



... complicating changes



Menus built on images

Cost of change = \$Ouch

Sad Story #1:  
Change to image links  
=  
Delay + Higher Cost

## Sad Story #2

### Agency needs major IT update



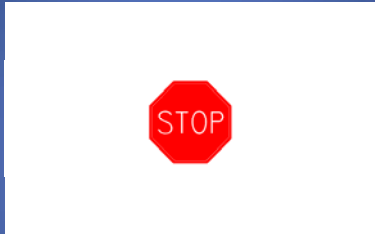
### Sketchy plans drawn up



### Software strategy: new interface to old applications

- A few applications moved to the Web
- Only the most frequently used applications chosen
- But, months into the project, agency wants everything moved to the Web
- Which led to . . .

a California stop



(enough slow-down to prevent  
losing all momentum)

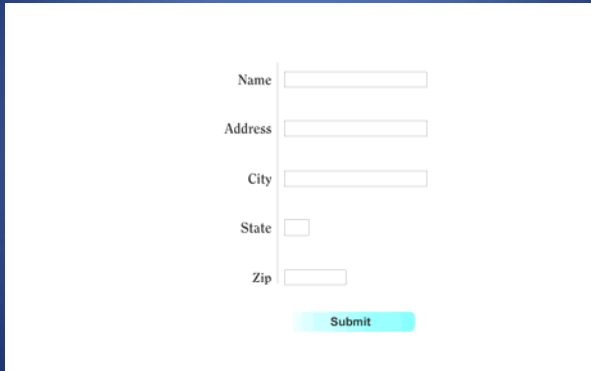
Result:  
Requirements creep

Agency's lack of planning  
meant its desires outpaced  
vendor's ability to produce

Sad Story #2:  
Mid-stream change  
=  
loss of direction

Sad Story #3

## Functional Web site



A screenshot of a simple web form. It contains five input fields: 'Name', 'Address', 'City', 'State', and 'Zip'. The 'State' field is a dropdown menu. Below the fields is a blue 'Submit' button.

## Non-profit needed user-friendly web-management tools

- Maintain membership lists
- Send e-mails
- Host forums, chat rooms
- Collect donations online
- Perform routine maintenance duties

## Where's my developer?

Hasn't called since the check cleared

Returns calls days later

Gives vague answers

Minimally cooperative



Sad Story #3:  
Tech fees > non-profit  
\$\$

## II. Core Issues

### 1. Change is inevitable

#### Technological

- Hardware
- Software
- Cyclical and disruptive change

#### Organizational

- »Funding
- »Mission
- »Regulations
- »Clientele

## Social

- Infrastructure
- Generational expectations

## 2. Agendas conflict

Web designers have their own . . .



**. . . and non-profits have theirs**

Inform their constituents  
Serve, connect with clients  
Use IT to control costs

### 3. IT & non-profits are different planets

For many non-profits

- IT often strange, little understood
- IT is necessary
- ability to use IT is often shallow
- the chances for trouble are plentiful

### III. Buyer's Guide

- Concepts to orient your thinking
- Talking IT like you could understand it

### 1. Orient your thinking

- Architecture
- Networks
- Cost
- In IT, (almost) nothing is new

### Architecture

High-level organization

- Where is the program?
  - licensed copies of MS Office
  - SaaS (Software as a Service)
- Where are the data?
  - local machines
  - cloud

## Networks

Despite having different names,  
networks do one main task:  
They enable computers to  
communicate with another device  
(computer, printer, etc.).

## Cost

Do new technologies help control IT costs?

The real question:  
How do you get the information  
you need to evaluate the claims?

## (Almost) nothing is new

“The software product  
is embedded in a cultural matrix of  
applications, users, laws,  
and machine vehicles.  
These all change continually,  
and their changes inexorably force  
change upon the software product.”  
Frederick P. Brooks, Jr. (1986)

## Conclusions

1. “New” technologies build  
on fundamental concepts.
2. Benefits of new technologies can be  
evaluated according to fundamental  
principles.

## 2. Talking IT

So, there you are, sitting in a meeting with a designer.

What do you say?

In IT, design means more than looks

Think “architect” or “engineer”

- aesthetics
- function

You could ask, “How does your design help all our users”?

Why? Answer could reveal important clues about what design is.

Because you have . . .

- identified all potential users
- thought about their particular needs
- considered that things may change
- thought about how you’ll maintain this new tool

## W3C Accessibility Standards

Pay a visit to [www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/)

1.3 Create content that can be presented in different ways (for example simpler layout) without losing information or structure.

Separating content from presentation  
promotes ease of maintenance

## Buyer's Guide in Brief

1. Plan for change
2. Consider needs of all users
3. Keep fundamentals in mind
4. Seek training
5. Maintain ownership

# Questions?