

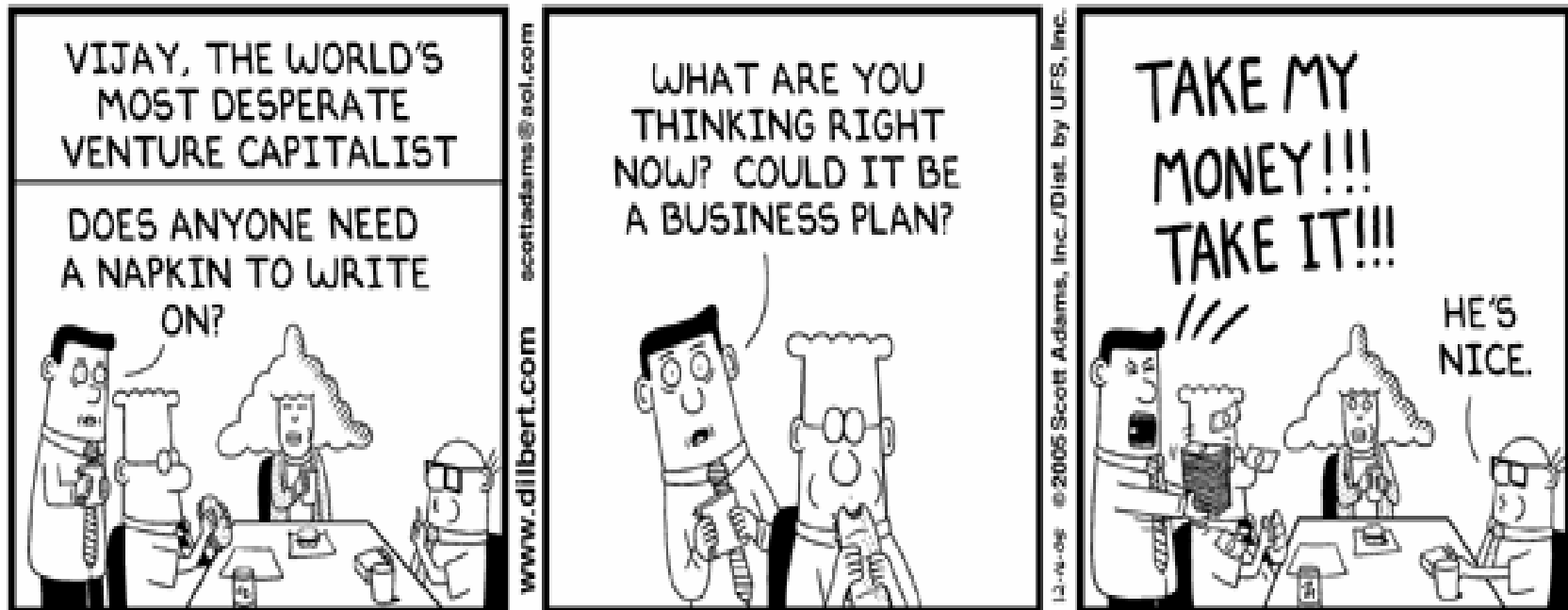
# Pitching Project Ideas

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Pragmatic Programmer Tip:  
It's Both What You Say and the Way You Say It

There's no point in having great ideas if you don't communicate them effectively

# Fact or fiction?



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# Outline

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- When do we make pitches?
- What makes a successful pitch?
- “Elevator Pitches”
- Value proposition statement

## References:

Pragmatic Programmer, Hunt/Thomas p18-23 (recommended)

<http://www.see.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/Management/art1.html> (optional)

[philip.greenspun.com/seia/writeup](http://philip.greenspun.com/seia/writeup) (optional)

# When do we make pitches?

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All the time!

To colleagues:

- o to argue for a technical direction

To management:

- o to convince that your idea/project/approach is of value

To customers:

- to purchase your product, to fund your project, to change their requirements ....

# What makes a successful pitch?

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1. Know your objective
  - Motivate your idea
  - Provide a focused, succinct, statement of the value
  - Differentiate yourself from others who offer the same (or similar) value
  - Include how, specifically, you can provide it
  - Justify the ability (and cost) of your team to do the work
  - Make it look good
2. Present at a level appropriate for your audience
3. Predict and answer the audience's (unspoken) questions
4. Leave your audience with something positive they can remember



# Knowing your audience...

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- W : **W**hat do you want them to learn
- I : What is their **i**nterest in what you have to say
- S : How **s**ophisticated are they
- D : How much **d**etail do they want
- O : Whom do you want to **o**wn the information
- M : How can you **m**otivate them to listen to you

# “Elevator Pitches”

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- “Okay, we're going to the 75<sup>th</sup> floor. You've got a minute and a half. What is this thing of yours is supposed to do anyway?”
- Covers *the most* essential parts from the point of view of your listener
  - No one cares about details and no one will remember them anyway.
- Use your time wisely
  - You are *not* marketing something that's already been made
  - You *are* trying to figure out if there is a need for this that is being proposed



# Common Mistakes When Making Pitches

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1. Misjudging your audience (their interests, background, requirements, etc.)
2. Not adequately motivating your idea  
Not helping the audience understand the “big picture” of the area in which your product fits
3. Not covering existing alternatives and what specific novelty you are offering
4. Not presenting a realistic picture of how the cost of the project justifies its value



# Value Proposition Statement

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Your audience, after listening to your pitch, must be able to *at least* fill out the following template reasonably accurately.

**For** (target customer)  
**who** (statement of need or opportunity)  
**the** (product or company name)  
**is a** (product or company category)  
**that** (statement of key benefit / compelling reason to buy).  
**Unlike** (primary “competitive” alternative),  
**our product** (statement of primary differentiation).

From “Crossing the Chasm” by Geoffrey Moore

# Example

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For users of the “pine” email client software on Unix who need to easily find content in their past email correspondence the “pine+” product is an email client software that is backwards compatible with “pine” and also free. Unlike “pine” or other similar Unix-based email clients, our product provides an intuitive way to annotate email messages with keywords of the user’s choice in order to facilitate subsequent searching by using one or more keywords in addition to the search functionality that “pine” offers.



**Can you make a Value Proposition about yourself to a prospective employer?**

# Fact or Fiction?



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