

IN THIS WEEK'S ISSUE: Saying No To Startup Life; Who Has The Best Software Quality?; Starting An IT User Group. Please remember to enable the images; the magazine looks a lot better that way!



PACKETPUSHERS

Human Infrastructure Magazine

A Newsletter About a Life in Networking

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The "Making choices" issue.

Thought For The Week:
So you want to be startin' somethin'?

1. Saying No To Startup Life

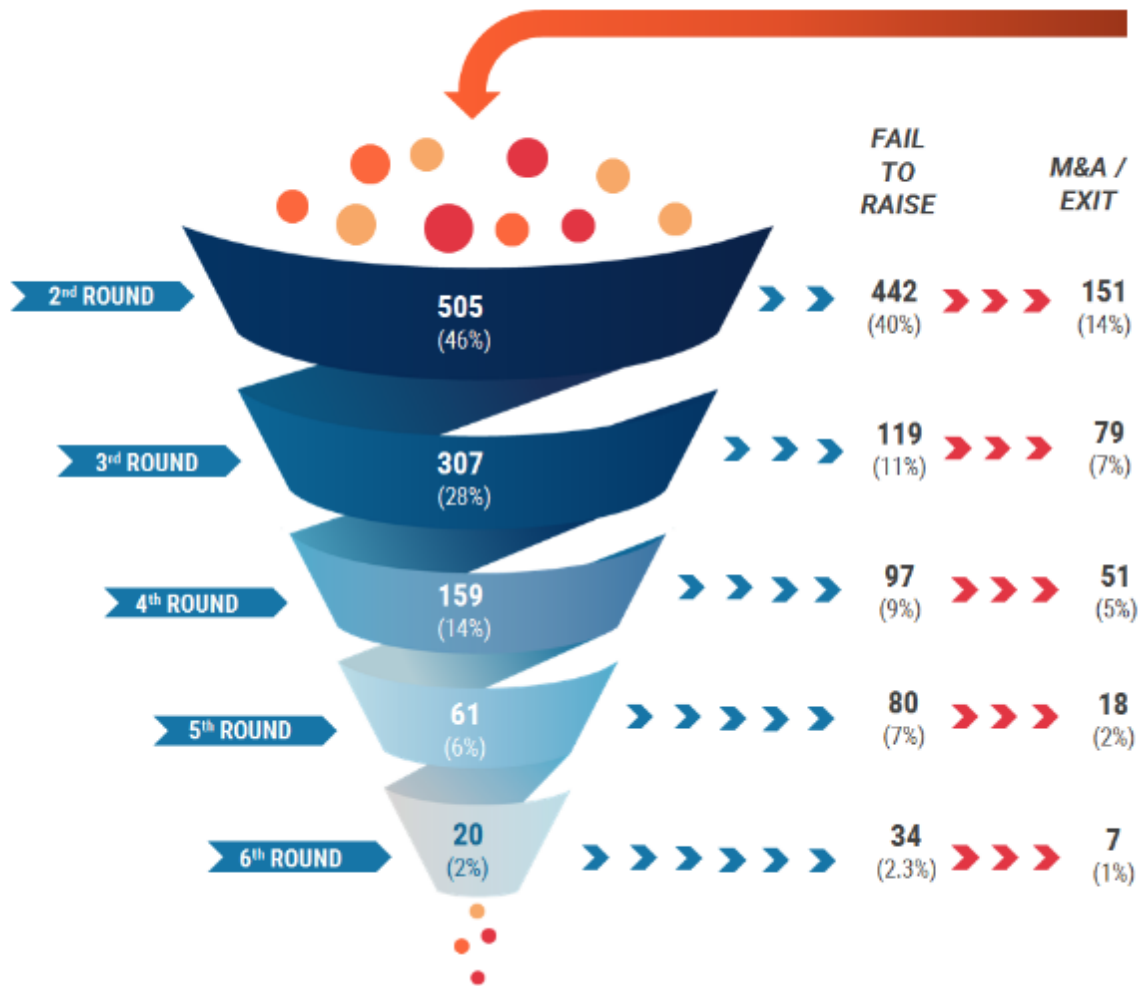
by Greg Ferro

I'm often asked why I'm not working at a startup. Short answer: On a rational, thoughtful basis it is stupid to work for a startup.

1. I won't start something expecting to fail. 70% of all startups will fail completely, 20% will lose money, 9% will get a modest return. Maybe 1 in a 100 will make it big. That's not even greyhound racing odds.
2. I'm not going to work for 5 to 10 startups before I get some sort of return.
3. I want equality in outcome. Founders can win while staff are likely to get nothing.
4. I won't sacrifice my personal life for a lottery ticket. I don't buy lottery tickets, so why work for one?
5. I'm willing to sprint for a few weeks. I'm not willing to sprint for years for an average wage.
6. Startups want absolute commitment and focus from employees. I have family to enjoy, science fiction books to read, and health to [protect](#).
7. The person with the money runs the show. This isn't the founder, it's the Venture Capital (or as we called it when I was the growing up, 'the bank'). VCs can do anything to the company at any time, for any reason. In real terms, you have rounding down zero percent control over the outcome of the company (hence why you are unlikely to get rewarded).

In case you think I'm exaggerating the risk, here is a chart showing typical exits for startups. ([Source: CB Insights](#))

1098 US SEED TECH COMPANIES



70%
DEAD / SELF-SUSTAINING

1% (10 companies)
REACHED UNICORN STATUS
INCLUDING...



Note: All numbers based on cohort of companies that raised Seed in 2008, 2009 or 2010 and disclosed valuations only.

CBINSIGHTS

Enterprise Infrastructure Startups: Different?

This chart isn't specific to enterprise infrastructure startups, which are somewhat different. Enterprise IT startups last longer than consumer startups but fail harder. Why?

Enterprise IT needs larger, more complex products that take longer to build. Then the sales cycle has long lead times. Startups burn cash while earning little revenue as they wait for customers to decide to buy.

So the runway for enterprise IT is longer, more stressful, and with higher stakes. Consumer startups are looking for large numbers of customers, while enterprise IT startups are looking for a few hundred customers to extend the runway and get the next version of the product out the door.

That's kind of fun and exhausting just thinking about it.

But just like their consumer counterparts, enterprise startups demand utter commitment from employees. They want to stock their workforce with over-achievers.

One key life experiences that took me 20 years to learn is that over-achievement is not rewarded in the long term. While you might get some short-term career benefits, the company will take whatever you give and put it on the bottom line for shareholders/owners while giving you very little in return.

It's not intentional. Managers and owners run the company as a whole. The performance of a single individual has a limited outcome on company performance. Rewarding individuals over the team is usually destructive because it creates divisions.

Like gambling, small rewards may come your way, such as a 5% pay rise, or conference travel. Sometimes you can earn a 'promotion' where you are expected to work even harder for a 10% pay rise. Of

course, you have been promoted on the basis of working at 120%, and now you are expected to increase your output another 120%.

Which is crazy.

Choose Wisely

Startup life is exciting, fast moving, and intense. Every day something new happens: new tech, new customers, new breakthroughs, and the team is pulling hard in a single direction. Compare that with your ITIL-stagnant, quotidian, rotting compost pile that is enterprise IT infrastructure.

It's exhilarating to be in a startup, working to create and execute on an idea. But this life isn't right for everyone. For me personally, finding a startup that would inspire me to overachieve...well, you know, it would have to be great.

I love work. I'm a hard worker, but it's time to realize that "rewards that match results" don't reward personal effort. **Results are team-driven.**

Over-achievement, over-commitment, and excessive work don't usually pay off. It might, but I'm not a gambler. And that's what a startup is: a one-in-a-hundred gamble.



Sponsor: Interop ITX

Where Tech Pros Go For Objective Full Stack IT Education

[Interop ITX](#) takes place May 15-19 at the MGM in Las Vegas. Join Greg Ferro and Ethan Banks for The Future of Networking Summit – a two-day session where we'll take a deep dive into next-generation

developments in wide area networks, data center networking, network operations, and software-defined security.

Register for Interop ITX and attend other hands-on workshops like The Future of Data, Container Crash Course, Dark Reading Cyber Security Summit and the Open Source IT Summit. The event's Conference tracks focus on Security, DevOps, Cloud, Infrastructure, Data & Analytics – all the technologies you need for a successful Full Stack IT strategy. If you're looking to accelerate your career, there are also plenty of sessions on leadership and professional development. Plus, check out over 100 vendors at Interop ITX's Business Hall where you'll have an opportunity to meet with leading and emerging tech vendors.

Join us at Interop ITX this May. Use promo code: **PACKETPUSHERS** when you register, and you'll receive 20% off any pass.

We want to see you in Vegas, so visit interopitx.com and reserve your spot today.

2. Your Favorite Vendors Based On Software Quality

by **Ethan Banks**

Recently, [I tweeted](#), "Using "software quality" as the metric, who is your favorite enterprise IT vendor?" In hindsight, that seems like snark bait. Perhaps it was, although I didn't mean for it to be. I was hoping to get back answers filled with love for this vendor or that, or at least for a specific product line.



Ethan Banks

@ecbanks

Following

Using "software quality" as the metric, who is your favorite enterprise IT vendor?

RETWEET

1



1:51 PM - 21 Apr 2017

↩ 10

↻ 1



The Hate

I did get a few loving answers back, and we'll get to them. However, the snarky answers are, I think, informative and worth considering. The response tweets below have been slightly edited for clarity and readability:

- E - None of the above?
- Hmm... interesting question!
- Agree: none. And that's a big defeat.
- Maybe the question should be "who is your favourite enterprise IT vendor despite the software?".
- That's like asking "if you have to be beaten with a stick, which type of wood do you prefer?"
- Tear jerking results so far. #Horrible
- Don't ask questions you don't want to hear the answers to. Or, in many business contexts: that you don't already know the answer to!

This is hardly a scientific survey--just a few folks who responded to my tweet. But still, ouch! This sentiment underscores an ongoing problem in the world of enterprise IT. Software--the applications and tools that our organizations run on--is problematic. Poor software quality isn't a new problem, but it does seem to be a more significant problem than it once was.

Once upon a time, many of the bug/patch cycles were related to security exploits. Now, the issues are just as often about stuff that doesn't work. My feeling is that much of this goes back to complexity. In the product arms race, software collects more and more features over time to retain old customers and win new ones. Features create dependencies, complicate QA testing, and add risk to the overall product.

Therefore, here we are. **Many IT practitioners hate all enterprise IT vendors when it comes to their software quality.** My silver bullet, and a point you'll hear me carry on about at Interop, is simplification. Simplifying our infrastructures is the way to de-risk them, and a key tenet of operating at scale--simple, replicable designs that do exactly what they need to, but no more.

As [Russ White so elegantly stated](#), "At some point, it's not adding features that is interesting. It's removing them."

The Love

Some love did make its way up through the snark, though. Again, hardly a scientific survey, but a few vendors were praised on some level as having better than average software quality. To the best of my knowledge, none of these responses came from employees of the companies being praised. *Once again, the response tweets below have been slightly edited for clarity and readability:*

- **Splunk.** And as a bonus you can use Splunk to debug all the other vendors' 🤖.
- **Veeam.** Probably @veeam.
- **Infoblox.** I'd give a shout to @Infoblox.
- **Red Hat & Canonical.** I find Red Hat and Canonical to be quite good, though they don't author all the code.
- **Paessler PRTG.**
 - PRTG has been consistently good. Smaller tools that are useful in general = better quality.
 - I'll second the vote for PRTG.

No endorsements here from Packet Pushers one way or the other, but it was nice to hear that at least a few companies are making a good impression on a few people.

The View From The Hot Aisle

I was also asked my opinion on this issue of a favorite vendor based on software quality. I won't give you one, but I will make a few observations.

We're moving into an era of highly complex, interdependent systems that run our data centers. That's bad for software quality.

If you want software quality, design infrastructures that value simplicity. Adopt fancy stuff with excruciating caution.

In networking, we're transitioning to a new management paradigm, one of automation and programmability. Transitions are bad for software quality, because there's lots of new code kicking around raising the "we don't know what we don't know" issue.

Be very careful when adopting the new shiny stuff. Almost none of it is fully baked yet. You're almost sure to find impactful bugs or incomplete features in automation tooling, APIs, etc.

Standards organizations and open source projects are creating an enormous amount of technical debt for software vendors in the form of new, evolving, half-baked, draft, and competing standards and programmatic interfaces. This, too, is bad for software quality.

Don't chase after products solving problems someone else has, which is why many bleeding-edge products actually exist. Focus on what you need, and let the SDO and OSS folks work on their own issues. Maybe consider adopting when a product is mature to the point that you're no longer reading about it in the tech press every week, i.e. it's gotten boring.

Finally, [watch Ken Duda of Arista](#) address the issue of software quality head on. I was in the room when he gave this talk. Please don't think less of me for admitting that Ken brought tears to my eyes while he spoke.



Sponsor: Apstra

Join Apstra and the Packet Pushers at Cisco Live!



If you're going to be at Cisco Live in Las Vegas this June, we'd love to see you at the Apstra Intent to Party Party.

Join the Packet Pushers and Apstra for dinner, drinks, and great conversation. This is an invitation-only event, so if you'd like to participate, please [click here to request an invitation](#).

[Request your invitation here](#) and we'll see you in Vegas!

When: Monday, June 26, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Where: The Border Grill at Mandalay Bay Resort

3. Why I Started A Local IT User Group

by Ryan Booth

I recently formed an IT User Group in my area called Amarillo IT-BDS

(Breaking Down Silos). I started the group to connect with other IT pros in town.

I'm active on social media, online forums, and as a blogger, but there's something about in-person communication that's hard to duplicate via the Internet. Slack is great and all, but real connections are forged face to face. I couldn't find an existing group for techies in my area, so I decided to launch one myself.

Our first meeting was this January, and we aim to have official meetups every month, with rotating presentations from members. We're also encouraging unofficial meet-ups at bars to talk shop and connect.

We are currently a small group of passionate techies, but that's OK. I'm more focused on the quality of discussion rather than the size of the group. Everyone is taking time out of their busy lives to be here, so these meetings have to provide value. If the discussions and content are great, the attendees will grow.

One of my goals for this group is to break down silos and get exposure to other areas of technology. I'm a network engineer, but I didn't want to limit conversations to just networking, so the group welcomes IT pros in all disciplines. That way, we can all learn from one another.

For example, developer/server types can help network automation noobs with version control, Git, and general dev practices.

And network folks can help Kubernetes and Docker users understand what this VxLAN tunneling stuff is in their clusters.

My overarching goal for this group is to help the local IT community grow and connect. I am a firm believer that we can grow stronger professionally as a group than as individuals. And I also believe that as professionals, we're obliged to mentor those with less experience and help them find their passion in IT.

To me, helping others grow is more important than any personal gain I could achieve.



Join the Datanauts on their mission to bust silos and explore the latest developments in cloud, convergence, data centers, and more. [Sign up free here.](#)

The Network Break



Network Break is a weekly podcast that delivers news & analysis on the networking industry in a fun, fast-paced style. [Subscribe here!](#)

Internets Of Interest

A collection of pre-loved links that might interest you. "Pre-loved" because I liked them enough to put into this newsletter. It's not *true* love.

By Greg Ferro and Drew Conry-Murray

Take The Packet Pushers' SD-WAN Survey

The Packet Pushers have talked about SD-WAN a lot over the past couple of years, so we thought it might be a good idea to shut up and give you a chance to tell us what you think about it.


We [put together a survey](#) to get an idea about your interest in SD-WAN. Our goal is to get some vendor-neutral data on questions like current and potential adoption, WAN challenges, and relevant features and functions. If you have a few minutes, we'd appreciate your responses.

[LINK](#)

State of the IT field: Demand is high for SKILLED engineers

Katherine McNamara [takes on some sticky questions](#) in IT around job threats from SDN and automation, outsourcing, and H1B visas. She also parses the difference between acquiring a piece of paper (that is, a certification) and actually knowing things.

"It doesn't matter if you live in India, Singapore, the United States, or Canada - the engineers with skills will always win and stand out from the bunch. The certifications or degree provide a blueprint or a map of what to study but just having the paper means nothing."



Sponsor: INE

Achieve Your Dream Career By Setting Smart Goals!

It's an exciting time to be working in the networking and IT industry. With many companies hungry to hire talented engineers, networking can be an attractive option for those considering a technology career or even for someone considering a mid-career change. But how can you tell if a career as a network engineer is the right choice for you? Which particular specialty in networking would best fit your interests and aptitudes?

One great way to make a confident decision is to talk with an expert in the field; someone who's walked the path you're considering and who can help you set smart goals, as well as show you the steps necessary to achieve those objectives.

If you or someone you know are considering in a career in networking, **join us on April 27th for a live Q&A webinar** with one of our highly respected instructors, Keith Bogart (CCIE #4923).

And get 15% off an All Access Pass subscription to INE. [Click here for details.](#)



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Product News

Find out about interesting new products, or get essential information

about things you might already be using.

Data Expedition Moves Your Data Into Public Cloud With CloudDat

Data Expedition makes MTP/IP. If you're a network engineer used to seeing TCP/IP or UDP/IP, then MTP/IP would catch your attention. MTP stands for "multipurpose transaction protocol." MTP was built to overcome the algorithmic challenges TCP has filling pipes.

TCP doesn't cope as efficiently as it might with latency, congestion, and packet loss. MTP was designed as a transport that can run at maximum, pipe-filling efficiency without human intervention no matter what the link bandwidth and conditions are between two MTP endpoints. In that sense, you might think that MTP sounds an awful lot like WAN optimization, but it really isn't.

[LINK](#)



Recent Podcasts

The last five podcasts published on Packet Pushers

PacketPushers.net - The Last Five

[Datanauts 081: Building Secure Email Infrastructure](#)

[Network Break 132: Riverbed To Buy Xirrus; Intel Rethinks OpenStack](#)

[Show 336: Ethan & Greg Ask Me Anything Part 1](#)

Watch This!

Where we collect some videos that make us reflect, think about our inner lives, or just entertain us.



This video assembles iconic shots from 100 movies over 100 years.



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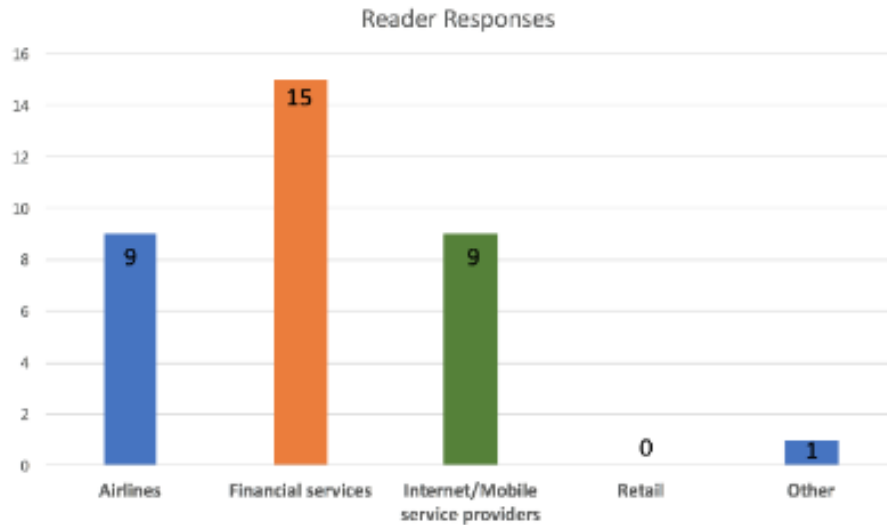
Quick Survey: Face Time

Besides the office, where do you get the most in-person interactions with other IT pros?

- [A. Local user group/meetup](#)
- [B. Regional tech conferences/events](#)
- [C. National or international conferences/events](#)
- [D. Random encounters \(i.e. on a flight\)](#)
- [E. I'm pretty solitary](#)
- [F. Other](#)

Last Issue's Survey Results

Which of these businesses is the worst when it comes to customer treatment?



Source: Packet Pushers Human Infrastructure Survey, April 12, 2017. 34 respondents

Did We Miss Something?

Got an link or an article to share? Email it to humaninfrastructure@packetpushers.net

The End Bit

Sponsorship and Advertising - Send an email to humaninfrastructure@packetpushers.net for more information. You could reach 5,013 people.

Human Infrastructure is bi-weekly newsletter with view, perspectives, and opinions. It is edited and published by Greg Ferro and Drew Conry-Murray from PacketPushers.net. If you'd like to contribute, email Drew at drew.conrymurray@packetpushers.net.

We don't give away your email address or personal details because that would suck.

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