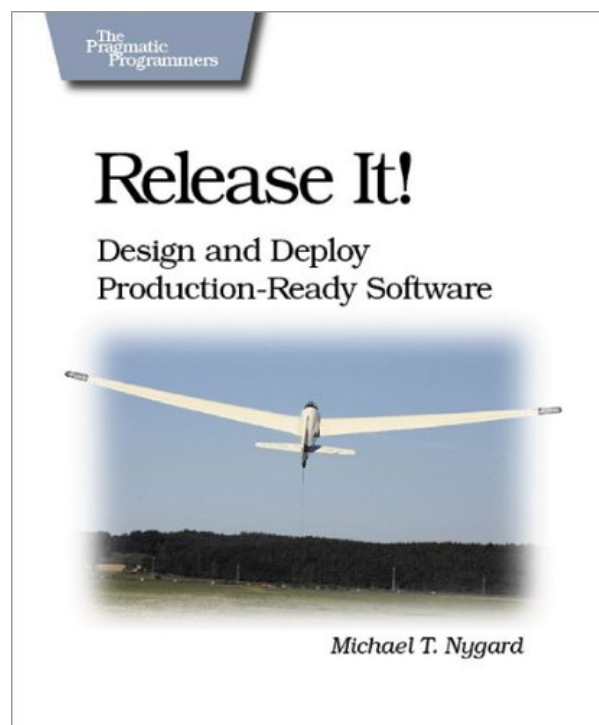


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PRODUCTION-READY SOFTWARE
(PRAGMATIC PROGRAMMERS) BY
MICHAEL T. NYGARD**



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About the Author

Michael Nygard has been a professional programmer and architect for over 15 years. He has delivered systems to the U. S. Government, the military, banking, finance, agriculture, and retail industries. Michael has written numerous articles and editorials, spoken at Comdex, and coauthored one of the earliest Java books. Michael has designed, built, and engineered systems for B2B exchanges, retail commerce sites, travel and leisure sites, an information brokerage, and web applications for the intelligence community. Among other exciting projects in his position as Director of Engineering for Totality Corporation, Michael led the operations team through the launch of a tier 1 retail site. His experience with the birth and infancy of this retail platform gives him a unique perspective on building software for high performance and high reliability

in the face of an actively hostile environment.

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Whether it's in Java, .NET, or Ruby on Rails, getting your application ready to ship is only half the battle. Did you design your system to survive a sudden rush of visitors from Digg or Slashdot? Or an influx of real world customers from 100 different countries? Are you ready for a world filled with flakey networks, tangled databases, and impatient users?

If you're a developer and don't want to be on call for 3AM for the rest of your life, this book will help.

In Release It!, Michael T. Nygard shows you how to design and architect your application for the harsh realities it will face. You'll learn how to design your application for maximum uptime, performance, and return on investment.

Mike explains that many problems with systems today start with the design.

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Most helpful customer reviews

34 of 35 people found the following review helpful.

Architecture for the paranoiac (or realist)

By James Holmes

The subtitle of this book might as well be Architecture and Design for the Paranoiac. The book lays out some critical aspects to creating and rolling out stable software systems. It's directed to those working in the enterprise arena and need the utmost from stability, capacity, and overall design. Nygard's definition of "enterprise" is somewhat broad in that he considers "enterprise" to be any system providing mission-critical support to a business. Regardless of how you define your particular software, I'm sure you'll find something useful in this book.

Nygard presents the book from an anti-pattern/pattern approach: he uses case studies to illustrate how critical errors in design or implementation (anti-patterns) have caused disastrous outages. He then moves on to show how application of solid design patterns could have avoided the problems. He also spends some time going in to detail on how some of the outages have happened, including brief discussions on network packet captures and decompiling third party drivers.

There are a lot of solid fundamentals in the book: dealing with exceptions at system integration points, thread synchronization, avoid rolling your own primitive feature libraries such as connection pools, and make sure to test third-party libraries which play critical roles. The general approach of discussing anti-patterns followed by patterns is also a nice way of putting forth the material.

There are a lot of more complex bits covered as well, such as thinking ahead on how you'll deal with bots and crawlers, avoiding AJAX overkill, designing ahead for and using session. I also liked that Nygard talks about the importance of involving the customer in decisions on thresholds and other critical boundaries.

Despite the great content, there is a blistering flaw, IMO: A complete lack of solid implementation specifics. Nygard doesn't provide much detail at all on actual implementation of the critical patterns he espouses, nor does he point you in the direction of other sources of information. For example, the Timeout pattern is held up as a vital aspect in many parts of the book; however, there's no practical detail on actual code to implement a Timeout, and there's only one reference to a practical implementation. The Circuit Breaker pattern, central to many of Nygard's architecture assertions, doesn't have any code or a single reference to

other material where you can find implementation details.

While I find that a major gap in the book, otherwise I think it's a solid addition to one's bookshelf. The writing style's very nice, his writing voice is light and concise, and the summary bullets in each section ("Remember This") are of great value. Additionally, there are plenty of references to other useful works. (Just not for the patterns I complained about above.)

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Everything a J2EE architect should know about real life deployment

By Christophe Addinquiry

Once in a year, I tag a book as "book of the year", the best book I read during the year. 2007 is not over, but this my "2007 book of the year", I know that.

Frankly, I just bought this book because it's published by the "pragmatic programmers" and I trust these guys. The title is not even appealing. I knew quickly that I will discover many things.

For a long time, I wonder what to do to build up a system which is fine in production, but I didn't understand quite right what was needed (I know now that I really misunderstood the problem). The first thing that came to my mind was to make the software strong (a good thing to do by the way) ; the second thing that came to my mind was to make it really, really strong (which starts to be stupid).

Michael helps us to understand that systems fail anyway. But it should fail fast (and can often fail only partially), it must facilitate diagnosis and quick restart. And design must deal with that. But the author doesn't stay in general considerations, he points out specific patterns and antipatterns for the systems design, by means of stability and capacity. The vast majority of articles tend to expose how new technologies make the life so easy. The author revisits technologies and technical choices through the production glasses: why AJAX should be considered with care, why we must think about pre-computed pages instead of dynamic composition in some cases, why caches is not a one-size-fits-all answer and so on. Another important point well illustrated: a system is software + hardware and the architecture must be thought with physical deployment and hardware architecture in mind. Promotion of full independence of the architecture over the deployment is plain wrong. There are so many subjects tackled here, I can't speak about them all, sorry.

Michael knows his stuff, because he worked on very big e-commerce sites and his horror stories (they are numerous) are quite impressive. Maybe you don't work for a huge e-commerce site ? I don't. Believe me, the lessons learned here are still valuable, because they are emphasized by the size of the system.

This is a 334 pages long book, with not so many pictures. I tend to prefer short books, simply because it takes time to read books. Here, each word count, it's not too long, for sure.

Oh, one last thing. I hate to give 5 stars. To deserve 5 stars, it must be hell of a book ! It is !!

Great job Michael, please notify me for the next one.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Design patterns of system architecture

By Larry MacNeill

This book is intended for architects, designers, and developers of software on which a business depends and whose failure costs money. The tone is informal and the style is easily read. Some architects may wish for more rigor and consider it too easily read but they might still benefit because it contains quite a bit of wisdom earned by experience.

The book discusses issues of uptime, failure, and maintainability with examples drawn from the author's experience and from other industries. Making the point from more than one point of view serves to drive it home.

This is not a programming book but the illumination of a problem is often improved by a snippet of code. The code is Java and is easily read by anyone familiar with programming. Having some familiarity with

multi-threaded programming in following the explanations and their examples will make them a little easier to read but is not necessary to get the point. (Even if you truly have no knowledge of Java, looking up JDBC, JVM, EJB, JSP, J2EE, log4j, and servlet will not be much effort because not much knowledge of them is required.) The examples emphasize web applications because, I suppose, that's the environment most vulnerable to huge capacity requirements, more complex environments, more numerous causes of failure, and failures that are more visible.

The author's analysis of the problem space has two dimensions --- stability and capacity --- in which a given enterprise system can be located. The analysis also has two categories: general design and operations.

Stability and Capacity

A given coordinate, on the stability axis, for example, implies the presence and absence of features that improve and diminish stability. A feature that contributes to stability is the use of timeouts and one that detracts is the presence of many interfaces to other systems. The author identifies 8 such stability patterns that contribute to stability and 11 antipatterns that detract from it. Capacity has 4 patterns and 10 antipatterns.

General design and Operations

These two categories are less structured than those of stability and capacity.

"General design" contains advice about networking (integration with local and remote servers), security (principle of least privilege and managing passwords), availability (load balancing and clustering), and administration (QA vs production environments, configuration files, anticipating failure in start-up and shut-down, and an administrative interface).

"Operations" contains advice about recovery-oriented computing (surviving failure by restarting components, et al.), transparency (allowing a view of the system's internals), and adaptation (managing change).

The idea of patterns from software development is raised from the level of programming to the level of systems. I might have called them, for example, stability patterns and anti-stability patterns but the author's meaning is clear enough.

At the end of each pattern and antipattern section is a short and effective summary that begins with "Remember this". The design chapter has a summary and the operations chapter has two section summaries. The author clearly has in mind the reader's take-home lesson and the possibility that the book may be skimmed to reread a section. The book is cross-referenced, forward and back -- if an idea of current relevance is explained elsewhere in more detail, the page number is noted. For example, if an antipattern has a countermeasure identified by a pattern, then the relationship is noted with a page number.

Implementing some suggestions may make the QA phase of testing easier by making diagnosis and (white box) testing itself easier. If you want to design your software to be more reliable and easier to maintain after the QA phase of testing, then this book is for you.

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