How I almost got fired
With Prof. Dr. Christian Johner

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Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

I was almost fired once, fired from my role as a business analyst, software architect.

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Looking back, I have to say that it would have been tragic for me and for the company, because I would have been fired at the exact moment when I was at my best.

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Medical Device Insights, a podcast by the Johner Institute for medical device manufacturers, authorities and notified bodies.

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this podcast episode reports on it, because some managers may be able to take something away from it.

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My boss at the time held me in high regard, interestingly enough for my programming knowledge and skills.

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But that wasn't because I was good at programming, but rather because I managed to develop prototypes quickly.

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And that made my boss feel very understood.

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He had the feeling that he was finally a programmer who listened.

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And who delivers results very quickly, sometimes the next day.

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That's why I was very recognized.

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I knew, however, that the code I had written, including it, would be horrible.

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It was so horrible that I often didn't know on Monday what I had actually written on Friday and what I had been thinking.

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But the others didn't know that and so I was chosen to lead a very large project.

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As I learned afterwards, it would be the largest IT project in the healthcare sector

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and it actually was.

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It was about creating an I.T.

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To develop a system on which several 100 clinics can work at the same time, clinics scattered across many, many countries and it was immediately clear to me that this was too big for me.

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I was completely overwhelmed.

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So I said, I need a partner and the biggest partner there was at that time, that was the company I.B.M.

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They also had a lot of respect for this project, but wanted to tackle it with us.

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I have something very

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Important things learned from them.

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They said to me: ‚Christian, solve your problems in the model.' And that didn't mean any personal problems, but what they actually wanted to say was: ‚Solve all the requirements for this system in the model, please don't program.' So it went so far that they said, if they catch me programming, then they're out.

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And I followed this advice very much and so we modeled and we started with flipcharts and so came after

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After a good month, our boss came and wanted to examine what we had written and he was used to us delivering quick results.

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But this time there was no software, there was no U.I.

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to look at, there were only flipcharts.

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He could hardly hide the disappointment and so he came back after another month and hoped to finally be able to see something.

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But there was no software.

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In the meantime, the flipcharts had become too small and we had plastered the whole office with washable wallpaper and had drawn on them.

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At that time, we also used the modeling language Booge.

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Well, classes are painted or drawn as clouds and that led my boss to the cynical comment that his little daughter would also like to paint clouds on wallpaper.

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That was quite hurtful.

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So, the pressure rose and rose and so it came the third time and we still had nothing.

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but we said, yes, we're pretty much done with modeling now.

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He makes it clear that it wouldn't go on like this now, even with me in my role.

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But then came the twist, after we had finished this model, we transferred it into a modeling tool.

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That was Rational Rose at the time and 600,000 lines of code were created overnight.

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This code and this architecture that we had developed there was stable.

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It was the same architecture, when I left the company 10 years later, it still existed.

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Well, a few colleagues had added rococo, flourishes and balconies here and there and a few developers had also cut through a few walls, but basically it was still the same resilient, scalable architecture that was also the basis, then for an entire company with over 50 employees.

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To Schäfer, of course, then satisfied, because the further development proceeded correspondingly quickly and we were then able to put clinic after clinic on this system and this system simply remained stable.

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For me, there were a few insights from this.

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Once, rapid progress can sometimes only be deceiving.

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It can't be that you have simply built up debts or built Potemkan villages that may inspire you in the short term, but with which you can't do a reliable business.

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The second insight was that it takes time to think.

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I say that because many people today are into iterations and iterating is a good method, especially if you want to do experiments, fast experiments.

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And we have to do experiments, we can't deduce everything cleanly.

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For example, it is hardly possible to predict the performance and reaction time of a highly complex system.

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You have to try it out, you can't calculate it.

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But

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iterating as a method to protect the gray matter, I don't think that's particularly effective.

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Yes, and these are the principles that accompany us to this day and that are useful to us and to our customers, especially when we help our customers to design good development processes.

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And good processes are processes that lead to the desired results very quickly.

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And interestingly, these good processes are usually also compliant processes.

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That is, when we work, when we support.

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First comes good engineering, for example software engineering, and then you test against IEC 62 304 and this conformity is usually implicitly given.

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Yes, that was the short story.

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So, if you liked the podcast, then subscribe to it.

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If you are a development manager, then consider whether these tips can help you and let us know if you have the feeling that your software development SOP may contain all the hype terms from

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Agile to test-driven, but you are still not really satisfied with the speed or the results.