

# The Role of the Toolsmith

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# What is a toolsmith?

- **Yes:** source control, builds, test environment, documentation environment, packaging, releases, project communication
- **No:** architect, long-term developer, manager
- Sometimes No means Maybe

# What else?

- Can a toolsmith write code? I hope so
- Should a toolsmith write code? Not for long
- Needs to be tool-neutral, e.g. editor choice
- Can be a lightning rod for technical arguments
- Evangelist for new tools
- It is a customer service role

# Personal

- I'm a toolsmith, and I used to be a developer
- Why the change?
- Why are there so few good books about development environments?

# Why would you want a toolsmith?

- To help developers write more code
- To help QA run more tests
- To help writers write more words
- Make the necessary things less irritating

# ROI

- Team size of  $N$  developers, and  $t$  toolsmiths
- $N = 1$   
You are the toolsmith, may spend 10-30% of your time tweaking the environment (or use a preconstructed dev. env. such as SourceForge)
- $N = 10$   
It's time for a toolsmith
- $N = 100$   
Time for another toolsmith

# ROI

- I recommend that  $t = \log_{10} N$
- An approximation, since it depends on the complexity of the tools involved

# Problems

- Good toolsmiths cost what good developers cost
- Some toolsmiths want to be developers (the same problem as QA)
- Toolsmiths get bored when a development environment becomes stable



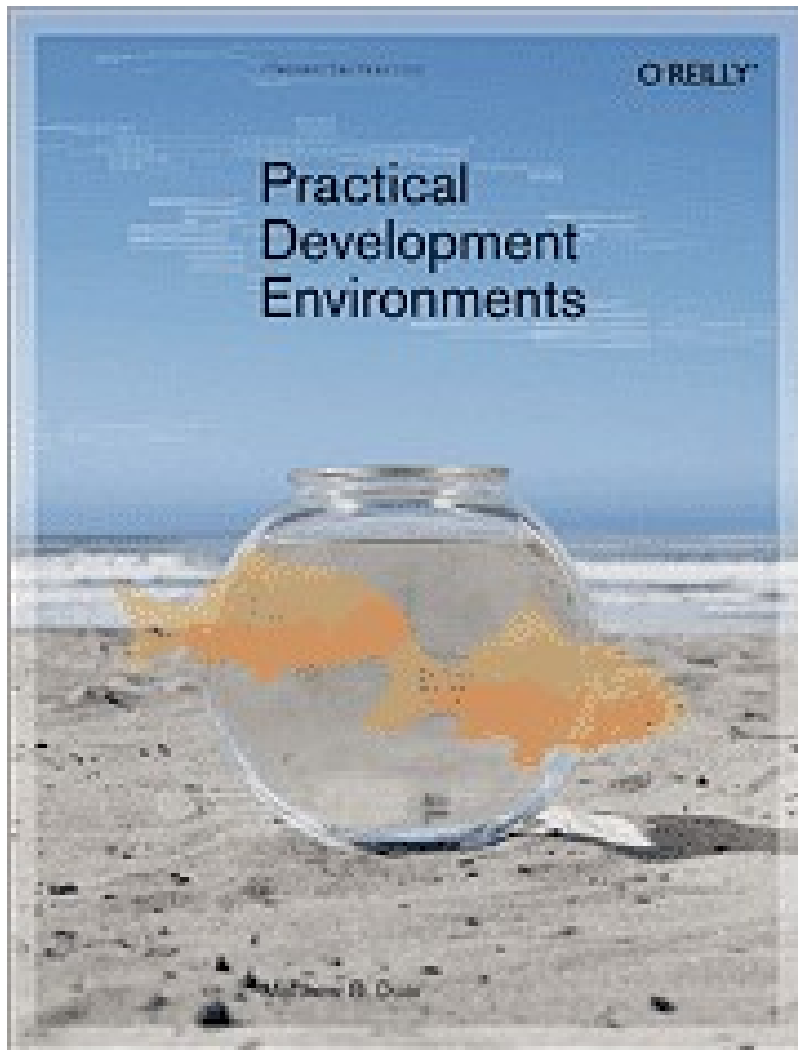
# Different viewpoints

- They're just overhead, like management!
- Our team is too small to benefit
- We just rotate the duties among ourselves
- Let's just get an intern to fix the build
- We can just use a preconstructed development environment such as SourceForge
- Other views?

# Where do I find a toolsmith?

- Personal contacts
- Newsgroups, blogs, job sites
- Keywords: toolsmith, build engineer, release engineer, configuration, source control
- Experience counts!

# Book Plug



- O'Reilly, Sept. 2005
- \$39.95, 297 pages
- It's a guide, not an encyclopedia

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