Essay Response to ‘How to be a Program Manager’, by Joel Spolsky

Joel Spolsky’s essay, entitled ‘How to be a Program Manager’, explained the trials and tribulations of being a Program Manager for a team of Software Engineers. He discusses the extreme dilemmas that burden the position. He also interprets many ways of providing solutions and examining these problems from a managerial respect. He provides many examples, mostly from personal experience, that help to exemplify his points. This essay seems to be almost a premonition to those who plan to tread this path, as well as a re-monition of a the path traveled.

Throughout the essay Spolsky continues to mention how the job of being a Program Manager comes with a heavy bearing. The Program Manager, says Spolsky, is basically at the top of the project’s development hierarchy, which makes him/her the main target for finger-pointing when anything goes wrong. He also describes the extreme magnitudes of dull meetings and the mundane process of dealing with paperwork, customers, amongst many other things. He does provide a few ways of dealing with these problems, as well. For example, he explains how, as a Program Manager, it is very beneficial to show your team that you are not choosing a side, or emotionally connected to any certain way of doing things; but, rather that you are simply dedicated to the facts and open to all opinions on any given matter.

In conclusion this essay is about what it means to be a Program Manager. That the job’s bite is not everything that it’s title barks; however, it is also not to be underestimated.