

It's Broken, Let's Fix It

The Zeitgeist and Modern Enterprise

We used to have this saying: "If it ain't broken, don't fix it." That was a powerful piece of wisdom. It meant: "If something should, against all odds, function properly, then do not touch it, you might make things worse!" But then, the re-engineering fashion emerged, and somebody whom I used to deeply admire as one of the most brilliant teachers I ever saw at work, when he was still an Assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), coined the phrase: "If it is not broken: break it!" Now that is obvious non-sense on a logical level, but is it on a social level? Society, and thus business, is driven by fashions. Some of us call it fads. There have been more of those than I care to list here. The more colorful, the more attention it gets. Attention translates more exuberant the statement, the into book sales and lecture fees. But it does not stop there. Very obviously, the more you pay for a speaker, the higher the distribution numbers for his book, the "truer" his message must be! We will revisit the "strange loops" caused by recursion often in this book. Let's start with one example. Did I pay a lot for this lecture because it is good, or is it good because it is expensive? One can very easily see a mechanism here that will make us gravitate towards ever louder and shallower truths.

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