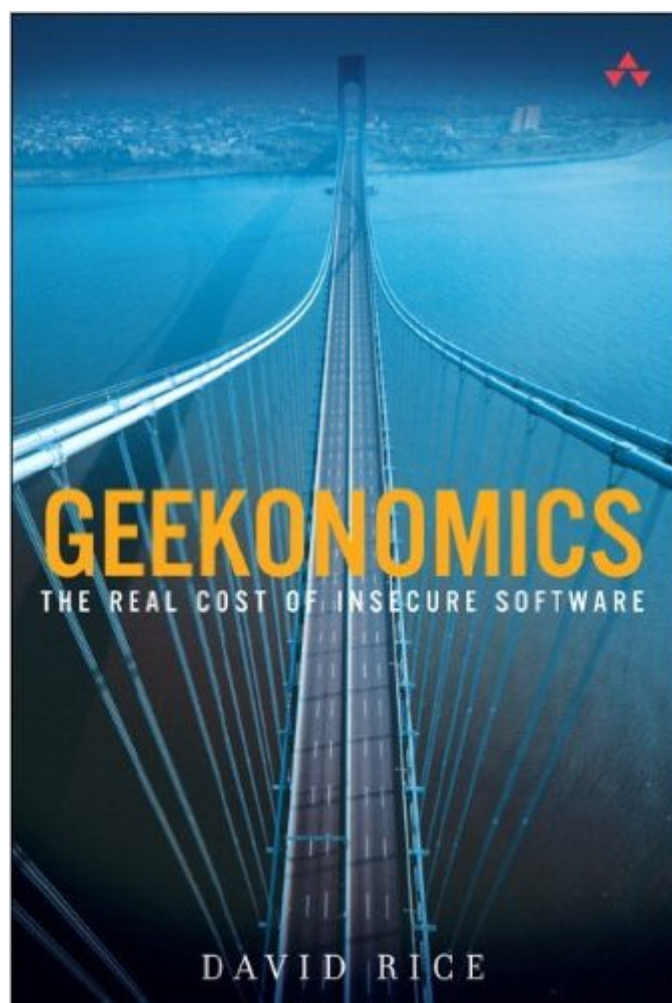


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Geekonomics: The Real Cost Of Insecure Software (paperback)



Synopsis

The Real Cost of Insecure Software In 1996, software defects in a Boeing 757 caused a crash that killed 70 people In 2003, a software vulnerability helped cause the largest U.S. power outage in decades In 2004, known software weaknesses let a hacker invade T-Mobile, capturing everything from passwords to Paris Hilton's photos In 2005, 23,900 Toyota Priuses were recalled for software errors that could cause the cars to shut down at highway speeds In 2006 dubbed "The Year of Cybercrime," 7,000 software vulnerabilities were discovered that hackers could use to access private information In 2007, operatives in two nations brazenly exploited software vulnerabilities to cripple the infrastructure and steal trade secrets from other sovereign nations | Software has become crucial to the very survival of civilization. But badly written, insecure software is hurting people "and costing businesses and individuals billions of dollars every year. This must change. In Geekonomics, David Rice shows how we can change it. Rice reveals why the software industry is rewarded for carelessness, and how we can revamp the industry's incentives to get the reliability and security we desperately need and deserve. You'll discover why the software industry still has shockingly little accountability "and what we must do to fix that. Brilliantly written, utterly compelling, and thoroughly realistic, Geekonomics is a long-overdue call to arms. Whether you're software user, decision maker, employee, or business owner this book will change your life "or even save it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I really, really liked Geekonomics, and I think all security and even technology professionals should read it. Why not give the book five stars then? The reasons are twofold: 1) the book fails to adequately differentiate between safety and security; and 2) the chapter on open source demonstrates fundamental misconceptions that unfortunately detract from the author's message. If you are kind enough to keep the thoughts in this review in mind when reading Geekonomics, you will find the book to be thoughtful and exceptionally helpful. It is important to remember that Geekonomics is almost exclusively a vulnerability-centric book. Remember that the "risk equation" is usually stated as $\text{risk} = \text{vulnerability} \times \text{threat} \times \text{impact}$. While it is silly to assign numbers to these factors, you can see that decreasing vulnerability while keeping threat and impact constant results in decreased risk. This is the author's thesis. Rice believes the governing issue in software security is the need to reduce vulnerability. The problem with this approach is that life is vulnerability. It is simply too difficult to eliminate enough vulnerability in order to reduce risk in the real world. Most real world security is accomplished by reducing threats. In other words, the average citizen does not reduce the risk of being murdered by wearing an electrified, mechanized armor suit, thereby mitigating the vulnerability of his soft flesh and breakable neck. Instead, he relies on the country's legal system and police force to deter, investigate, apprehend, prosecute, and incarcerate threats. Consider now the issue of safety vs security. The author makes comparisons using the London sewer, various aspects of driving, and the New York subway system.

Depending on who you ask, mankind has survived on this planet for somewhere between 10,000 and 160,000 years. However, we are the first generation to be dependent on software. Geekonomics opens with a discussion of the importance of cement and how crucial it is to our civilization. From roads to sewers, cement is our infrastructure and I could not agree more. After the driest summer since they have been measuring such things, the rain has been falling and falling and falling and my farm is one big mudhole. Every unimproved road is dangerous and some of the asphalt is failing. So I am replacing and improving with cement. It is expensive, but cement roads will outlast me, my son and his sons. Software is as important to infrastructure as cement as a foundation of civilization asserts the author of Geekonomics, David Rice, but while considerable energy has been expended to normalize the manufacture and application of cement, much less work has been done with software. While the cement roads we are putting in will last a hundred or more years, the author points out that software is often essentially obsolete by the time the consumer takes possession of it. In fact, consumers value innovation so much, that it is prized

above security even if a quick look at the news shows us the cumulative effect of software failure leading to data breach. At this exact moment, according to privacyrights.org, 216,770,536 consumer records have been lost. As Rice points out, in the 1970s the criminal underground realized there was more money to be made, at less risk of being caught, trafficking in drugs than other forms of crime, so it became a big thing.

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