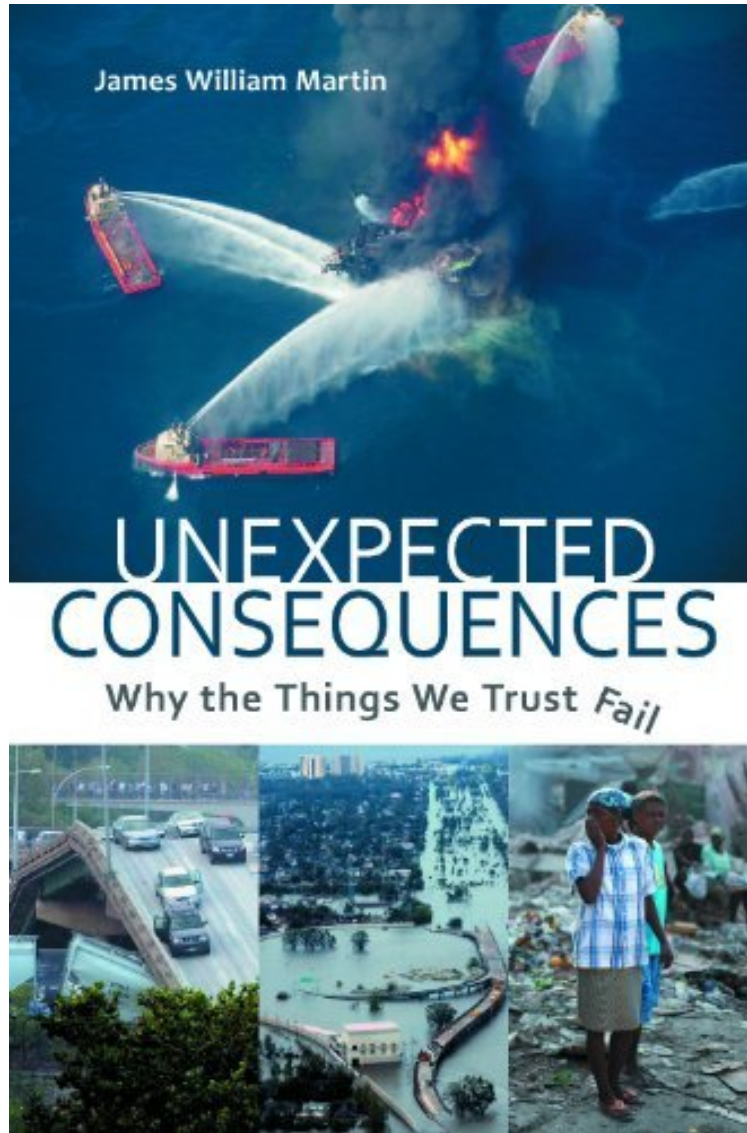


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Unexpected Consequences: Why The Things We Trust Fail

James William Martin

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1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. great book for engineersBy SpiderGwensNewBoothis book clearly defines how engineers should look at all potential flaws in their designs, and proves that even when we think everything is perfect, human errors and natural disasters can still find a way to prevail. This is a good read for any engineer looking to create the safest designs possible, with lots of safety factors and backup systems.0 of 0 people

found the following review helpful. A must read
By E. Rojas
This book is an important piece of literature for anyone looking to further understand humanity's role in some of history's most recent and historical catastrophes.

Unexpected Consequences: Why The Things We Trust Fail explores the reasons these failures occur, examining them from technological, human, and organizational perspectives. Using more than 40 recent catastrophic events to illustrate its points, the book discusses structural and machine failure, but also the often-overlooked failure of people and of systems related to such things as information technology, healthcare, and security. As the book demonstrates, faulty technology played a surprisingly small part in many of the scrutinized disasters. Author James William Martin finds cognitive factors and organizational dynamics, including ethics, are major contributors to most unexpected and catastrophic failures causing loss of life and extensive property damage. With that fresh perspective in mind, Martin is able to suggest remedies that address service failure and just may help prevent future disasters from taking place.

"The book's seven chapters provide an interesting, timely perspective on the unique interrelationship among a project's technological design, an organization's culture and dynamics, and social-psychological factors such as attitudes, information filtering, self-concept, social influence, status, self-esteem, and volition as causal factors in the often unexpected and usually catastrophic failures." - Choice
From the Author
This book describes some of the underlying attitudes and behavior of individuals and groups from a social-psychological perspective. This discussion has applications within a new product development team as well as with its customers, stakeholders and the people using a product or service. Organizational structure and culture also directly impact the design of products and services. First they create project management procedures and policies. In this context, some organizations manage their design processes well whereas others do not. Important factors affecting how well organizations manage design activities include their organizational structure, strategy, culture, policies and procedures, communications as well as their ethical implementation. It analyzes twenty-five recent catastrophic examples of product and service failures. Each incident is analyzed using the tools and methods to identify the causes of failure. The case studies include well known incidents which have occurred in construction, aviation, information technology, health care, security and others known to almost everyone. Examples of construction failures include the recent San Francisco Bay Bridge repairs, the catastrophic collapse of the I-35W Mississippi River Bridge in Minnesota, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the Chernobyl disaster. Aviation failures include Air France Flight 447 and Continental Connection Flight 3407 near Buffalo, New York. Information technology failures include the Mariner I Space Probe explosion, the National Cancer Institute; Panama City miscalculated radiation dosages and similar incidents. Health care failures include SARS in Asia and production problems associated with the H1N1 Swine Flu Virus. Regulatory failures include Security and Exchange (SEC) regulatory issues, Fannie and Freddie issues and food contamination. Security failures include the constant assault of software viruses on information technology systems and the difficulty of identifying terrorists. Political failures include energy policies and management, healthcare coverage and other examples. The human and property costs of each incident are identified and analyzed to demonstrate that failure prevention is usually both feasible and economic.
About the Author
James William Martin is the author of several books focused on change management, teamwork and process improvement. He has coached and counseled thousands of people across Japan, China, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Australia, and North America to use fact based methods to achieve their goals and improve their lives. His interests include environmental friendly design as well as personal and organizational ethics, productivity and change management. He holds a Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering, Northeastern University; Master of Business Administration Providence College; and Bachelor of Science degrees in Industrial Engineering, and Biology from the University of Rhode Island.