Your codebase is like a kitchen
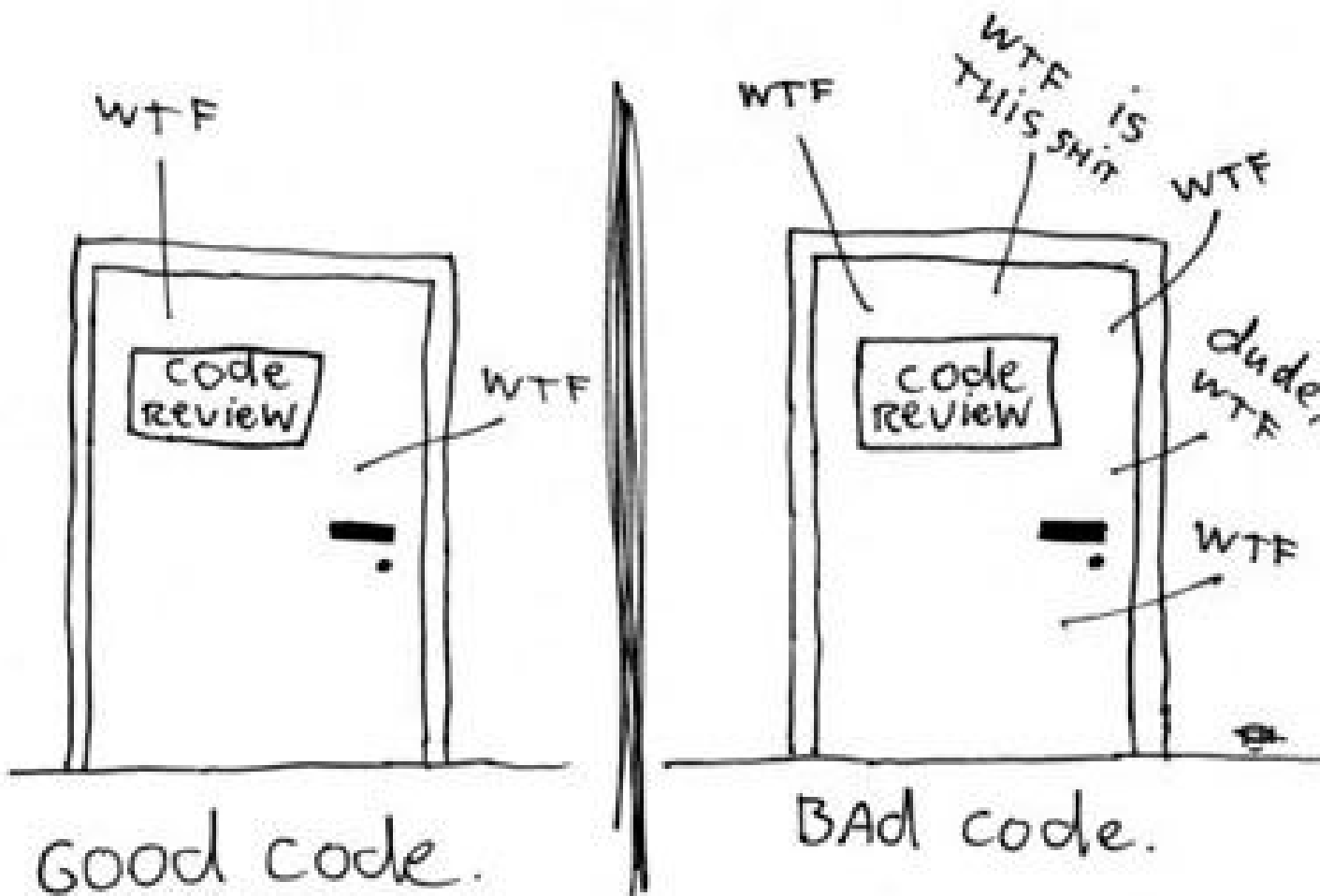
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5 minute lightening talk at ACCU 2009
April 24, 2009

(reproduced with kind permission of Thom Holwerda)

The state of your codebase determines what you can achieve

Analogy

The codebase is like a kitchen

suppose you are just going to make something nice for yourself

then, really, anything will do.

Even...

but, software development is usually about more than just making something nice for yourself.

It is usually about making something really fancy...

寿司
sushi

which one do you like best?

together with a large team of professionals...

for some demanding customer...

Then it is obvious:

To succeed you need a clean and functioning working environment.

summer savory leaves and
garlic, bay, and lemon juice
for fish

thyme of roasted pepper in **olive oil**, minced
thyme. Serve over pasta or rice

OLIVE OIL

RHODODENDRON

SPIDER CRAB

Your codebase is like a kitchen.

Keep it clean so that you can create spectacular solutions for your demanding customers!

The Boy Scout Rule

Leave the campground cleaner than you found it.

The Importance of hygiene

Uncle Bob has suggested that we are now about to "discover" techniques and principles in software engineering that can be compared to the discovery of the importance of hygiene in hospitals by Ignaz Semmelweis in the middle of the 19th century.

(Semmelweis in the middle with arms crossed)

Semmelweis found that by introducing hand washing standards before surgery the number of fatal incidence caused by diseases dropped drastically. At the time, diseases were attributed to many different unrelated causes. Each case was considered unique, just like a human person is unique. Semmelweis' hypothesis, that there was only one cause, that all that mattered was cleanliness, was extreme at the time, and was largely ignored, rejected or ridiculed. [wikipedia]

At the point where a certain standard hygiene was accepted and enforced by the medical establishment, doctors started to behave as a group of professionals. This happened about 60 years after Semmelweis' discovery. As software engineers we are not always behaving like professionals, especially not at times where we let pressure from management and customers decide whether we write clean code or not. We know that dirty code is going to slow us down and delay the project, but still, for some reason, we sometimes end up in situations where we do exactly what we are not supposed to do. Imagine how a group of doctors today would react to a situation where they are told not to wash their hands between surgeries? Doctors act as professionals. Unfortunately, as a group of software engineers, we are not there... yet.