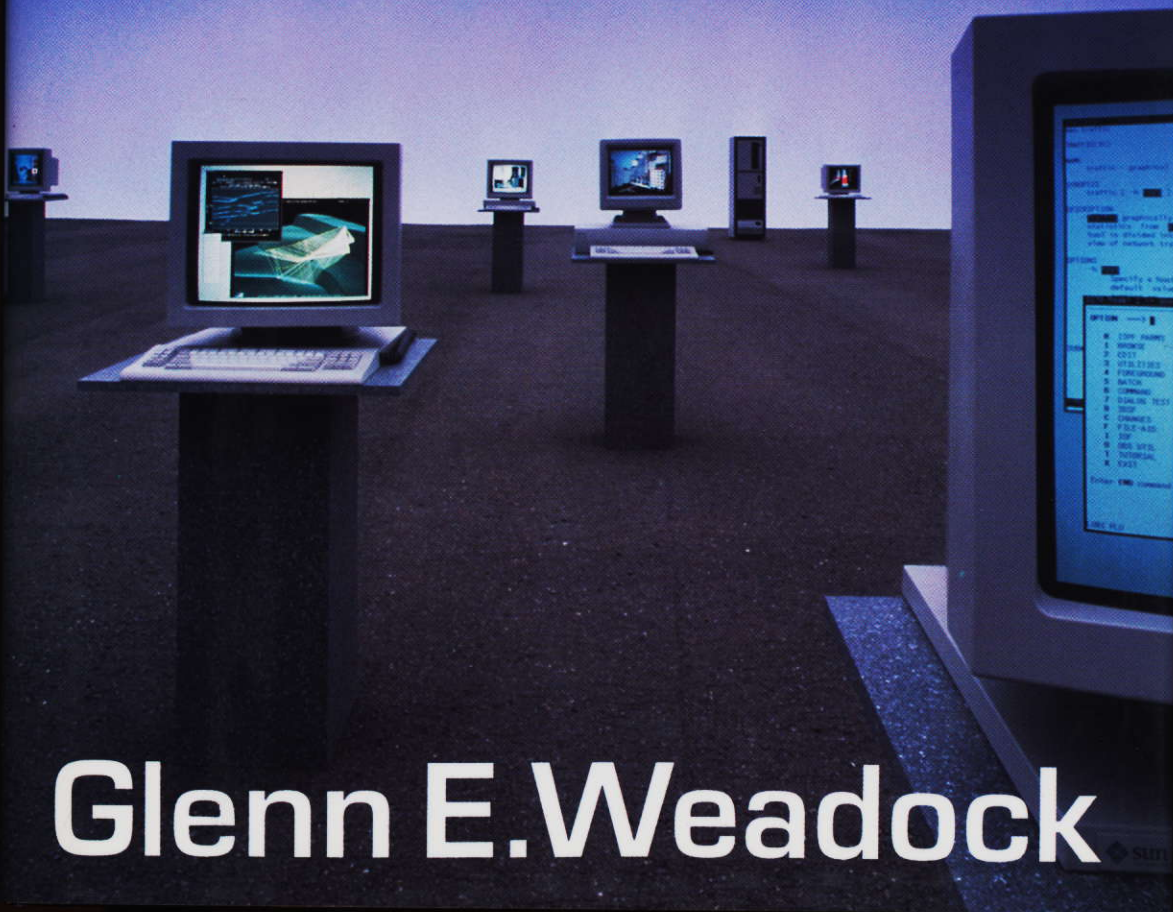


EXPLODING THE COMPUTER MYTH

Discovering the 13 Realities
of High Performing
Business Systems



Glenn E. Weadock

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run either MS/DOS, OS/2, or UNIX (among others), each of which manage computer housekeeping operations in very different ways.

Operating systems create organized data structures on disks for storing information such as names, dates, and dollar amounts; such structures are called *data files*. The programs themselves, whether part of the operating system or applications programs, are called *code files* or, more concisely, *code*. Some computers use a hierarchical, branched file structure that allows data and code files to be grouped into *directories*; for example, October transactions might reside in a different directory than November transactions. Directories organize disks much as manila folders organize file drawers.

Operating system software, networking and communication software (which handles data movement between connected computers), and system utility programs (which help the operator manage the computer's resources) collectively comprise *system software*. In the heyday of mainframes, the same company that built the computer (usually IBM) would write and sell system software for it. Although many companies (for example, Apple) still work that way, it's no longer generally true with small computers; one may buy a PC from Compaq but the operating system from Microsoft. The process that the computer goes through at power-up, when the system software loads into RAM, is called *bootstrapping*, or *booting* for short; the machine figuratively pulls itself up by its bootstraps.

APPLICATION SOFTWARE

In contrast to system software, programs that enable users to do specific and useful tasks with the computer, such as word processing and inventory management, are *application software*. They use the facilities provided by the operating system behind the scenes, but the user may not even know the operating system is there. Activating application programs is also done by reading