Microspeak: Ripcord

devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20170912-00

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Remember: General business jargon still qualifies as Microspeak if it is in wide enough use at Microsoft that you are expected to know what it means and how to use it.

Today's Microspeak term is *ripcord*. A *ripcord* is an alternate, much less risky plan which can be easily deployed at the last moment. You can think of pulling the ripcord as deploying an emergency parachute to prevent your project from plummeting to its death.

You might say that the ripcord is a backup plan to ensure that your feature lands. You would prefer to land the plane, but if things go really bad, you can push the eject button and yank the ripcord.

One example of a ripcord would be a compile-time `#ifdef` that switches over to the less-risky plan. This would allow the feature to be turned off just prior to shipping. Another would be a runtime check against a configuration setting which disables a risky feature. The runtime check allows the feature to be turned off even after you ship.

Of course, in order to be sure that your low-risk plan really is low-risk, you need to add the ripcord to your acceptance testing!

Here are some citations:

> When releasing a feature to Insiders, make sure you have specific *ripcord* criteria in place for feature functionality and reliability.

In English, this means that before releasing a feature to Insiders, make sure you have specific functionality and reliability criteria in place to determine whether to keep the feature or to withdraw it. (And if you decide to withdraw the feature, make sure you have a plan for doing so quickly and with very low risk.)

> You can create additional security groups as a ripcord in case the default security groups do not adequately express your needs. We strongly recommend that you use the default security groups, because custom security groups are more expensive on the back-end, and they are confusing for users.

As we see above, the term has been generalized to mean an escape hatch to cover any unforeseen circumstances. In this case, creating a custom security group is not a plan that replaces a risky option with a less risky option. (Indeed, it's the opposite. It's replacing a safer option with a riskier option!) Rather, the custom security group is an alternative that supplements the existing default security groups in case they prove insufficient.

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