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/dev/random

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IN THE COURSE OF MY CURRENT employment I have cause to examine logs from a wide variety of systems. I am often struck by the utter uselessness of the so-called error codes displayed in some of these, inasmuch as no reliable and convenient means seems to exist to match the cryptic numerics with any functional description of the problem they purport to represent. Even when the harried system administrator does manage to stumble across a Rosetta Stone for decoding these mystical glyphs, the explanations are, more often than not, about as useful as a fork in a tomato-soup–eating contest. (Note to the analogy-impaired: that's not very useful.)

RodentSoft Corporation
RatsNest 2007, SP666
Misinformation Base Article #XC4-2347-0099-8675309
System Error Codes.

Code	Meaning
100	System error. Or possibly not
222	Switching to toaster-only mode
557	Bad juju
560	Could be a problem
601	Service engine soon
747	CPU not found. How are you reading this?
911	Please exit to the rear
1024	Bad code in some library or other
5555	Oopsie
6767	Sumpin' ain't right
8080	Probably time to reboot
9999	Consider getting a typewriter

UNIX isn't entirely immune from this malady, but in my experience the issue there, rather than error codes that don't tell you anything, is error messages that give you *more* information than you want to know or, at times, are willing to fall for. One of the driving forces behind this phenomenon is probably the lemming-like explosion of *nix variants available for the eager consumer to deploy and enjoy. Every flavor wants to stand out from the pack. What better way than rolling your own custom error codes, available for a limited time only with two proofs of purchase (some parts may not exist)? By my conservative estimate there are 2,357 better ways, in point of fact. But they never ask me.

I was digging around in a closet the other day looking for Christmas presents I misplaced during the

Reagan era when I came across an ancient pizza box containing my SPACK-LE-1 processor with the 0.8-MHz frontside micro-bus (and a petrified slice of pepperoni with extra mushrooms). To give you an idea of how old this computer is, the backplane was made by Sopwith.

Anyway, I decided to fire that puppy up. I broke out the priming fluid and hand crank and in no time (less than two hours) I was chugging along the information goat trail. This system, being the relic it is, had a messages log (which I had to translate on the fly using sanskrit2english.pl) that was re-plete with interesting errors, some of which have never before been seen in civilized society. In pursuit of esoteric knowledge and a modicum of sanity (I am, if nothing else, ever the optimist), I plumbed the depths of a file system grown fully hoar and uncovered the antediluvian artifact /usr/include/sys/errornonono.h, from which I here liberally and unabash-edly quote:

```
#define EEEE      900    /* Poltergeist discovered in system        */
#define EEOW      901    /* Chassis dropped on foot                 */
#define E@#*!     902    /* Monitor dropped on same foot            */
#define ENUFF     903    /* SMTP flame limit reached                */
#define EIEIO     904    /* Barnyard odor detected                  */
#define EEEW      905    /* Keyboard jammed with old tuna           */
#define EH?       906    /* Microphone input not enabled            */
#define EBERT     907    /* Streaming video rejected                */
#define ENEBRI8   908    /* Unreadable configuration data           */
#define EYEEYE    909    /* Talk Like a Pirate Day notification     */
#define EGOLD     910    /* Deprecated                              */
#define ELMER     911    /* Vendor FUD alert                        */
#define EEHAW     912    /* Extreme overclocking in progress        */
#define EMO       913    /* All display colors set to #000000       */
#define EGAD      914    /* Language file needs updating            */
#define EZZZT     915    /* Electrical short detected               */
#define ENTROP    916    /* File system randomization underway      */
#define EGON      917    /* Warning: streams crossed                */
#define ESSSS     918    /* Mouse ingested by passing snake         */
#define ENDER     919    /* Numerous bugs in system                 */
#define EGGCESS   920    /* Too many shells installed               */
#define EBAY      921    /* Cheap surplus components failure        */
#define EZ2C      922    /* Extra large font selected               */
#define EARWIG    923    /* Contact exterminator ASAP               */
#define ENRON     924    /* Auditing disabled                       */
```

Boy howdy, that puts the "head" in "header," don't it?

N.B.: Auditing those pesky security logs does *not* consist of glancing at them briefly over a cup of double mocha decaf before you get back to Homestar Runner. You actually have to *pay attention* to logged events and look them up 'n' stuff. Maybe, if the planets are right, you might even want to *do something about* them.

This has been a public service announcement by the Council for Clearing Things Up.