# When in doubt, consult the online Magic 8 Ball

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On our team's web site, buried among the other debugging documents, was a page titled simply "Magic 8 Ball"®[1]. If you visited it, you got a dark blue circle with a lighter-blue triangle, on which appeared white text with a randomly-chosen message. The messages were things like

- Memory corruption.
- Try a newer build.
- Known bug.
- Can't connect.
- Hardware failure.
- Looks like a X bug. (Where "X" was a random component.)

It was fun to give the 8-ball a shake, but the real purpose of the 8-ball was to be a link sent out in response to failure reports. You see, there was a secret URL for each of the 8-ball's responses, so you could respond to a failure report with something like

> The Magic 8 ball says… http://internalserver/magic8.asp?TWVGS

and when the person clicked on the link, they got an 8-ball that said "Known bug" or "Memory corruption". Some teams liked the 8-Ball's responses so much, they asked us to add new custom messages to the repertoire. Anyway, I was reminded of this by the story of Radio8Ball.

[1]Magic 8-Ball is a registered trademark of Tyco Toys, Inc. When the Tyco scandal hit the airwaves, I always did a double-take before realizing that it was a different company.

- Tyco International = scandal-plagued multinational conglomerate, cursed by shareholders.
- Tyco Toys = a division of Mattel, maker of the Magic 8 Ball, beloved by soothsayers.

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