

# Re: Computer programmers' habits in electronics

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- *From:* Tim Wescott <[tim@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:tim@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Wed, 21 Dec 2005 12:28:17 -0800
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Ignoramus32515 wrote:

On Wed, 21 Dec 2005 19:31:08 GMT, Rich Grise, but drunk <[yahright@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:yahright@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

On Tue, 20 Dec 2005 19:49:09 +0000, Ignoramus10397 wrote:

On Tue, 20 Dec 2005 19:29:21 GMT, Rich Grise, but drunk <[yahright@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:yahright@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)>

Got any overflow work?

I am sorry, what is overflow work.

When you have so many customers that you can't fill the need, so you take on outside help temporarily to take care of the overflow. You know, like "My cup runneth over", but of work?

I'm kinda looking for some stuff where I could telecommute; I know just enough C and perl to get myself in trouble, and can do hobbyist-level electronics - I used to be able to slap together uC circuits, but I don't really have a proper lab these days.

I'm wondering if I should look around for proofreader work, or does anybody bother to have anything proofread these days?

## Re: Computer programmers' habits in electronics

Sorry, nothing that I can think of, of the sort.

Somewhat tangentially...

We are interviewing people for computer programmer positions. We are looking for those who can actually "do stuff" without too much babysitting.

Lots of people come in with impressive resumes. When I talk to them, I know that some people are very good at bullshitting, so I give them a couple of actual tasks to do. Very small simple things. One is to write a nice function that reverses a string in place. For example, "Rich" would become "hciR".

Almost no one can actually do this without making mistakes, many people give up completely.

Very frustrating. I consider it the most basic capability of a programmer.

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Someone who likes to ask that question told me of an interviewee who got as far as saying "I think it involves recursion...".

So I wrote a version that did it using recursive function calls and sent it to her. I don't know if I would have gotten the job -- they had already made the mistake of hiring me.

Good thing the PC has a lot of stack space.

For interviewing embedded SW engineers we finally settled on a fairly basic scaling problem. We started with a little story problem that required the interviewee to find the ratio of a couple of numbers and multiply it to a third, then we said "oh, by the way, our floating point library is too slow -- do it with integers". The question usually took about 40 minutes to explore fully, with some folks never getting it and some just glancing at the board and writing down the correct answer.

It's amazing how you can separate the desktop programmers from the

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embedded engineers with that one.

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