

## Re: OT: The Husband Store (humorrhoid)

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*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.electronics.design/2007-03/msg01370.html>

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  - *Date:* Wed, 07 Mar 2007 19:13:39 -0500
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How bout an engineers Humor...

Probably needs to be updated. I got this when a Pent II was the hottest thing out there.

### The Hidden Costs of Toast Technology

Day 1: My boss, an engineer from the pre-CAD days, has successfully brought a generation of products from Acme Toaster Corp's engineering labs to market. Bob is a wonder of mechanical ingenuity. All of us in the design department have the utmost respect for him, so I was honored when he appointed me the lead designer on the new Acme 2000 Toaster.

Day 6: We met with the president, head of sales, and the marketing vice-president today to hammer out the project's requirements and specifications. Here at Acme, our market share is eroding to low-cost imports. We agreed to meet a cost of goods of \$9.50 (100,000). I've identified the critical issue in the new design: a replacement for the timing spring we've used since the original 1922 model. Research with the focus groups shows that consumers set high expectations for their breakfast foods. Cafe latte from Starbuck's goes best with a precise level of toastal browning. The Acme 2000 will give our customers the breakfast experience they desire. I estimated a design budget of \$21,590 for this project and final delivery in seven weeks. I'll need one assistant designer to help with the drawing packages. This is my first chance to supervise!

Day 23: We've found the ideal spring material. Best of all, it's a well-proven technology. Our projected cost of goods is almost \$1.50 lower than our goal. Our rough prototype, which was completed just 12 days after we started, has been servicing the employee cafeteria for a week without a single hiccup. Toastal quality exceeds projections.

Day 24: A major aerospace company that had run out of defense contractors to acquire has just snapped up that block of Acme stock sold to the Mackenzie family in the '50s. At a company-wide meeting, corporate assured us that this sale was only an investment and that nothing will change.

Day 30: I showed the Acme 2000's exquisitely crafted toastal-timing mechanism to Ms Primrose, the new engineering auditor. The single spring and four interlocking lever arms are things of beauty to me.

Day 36: The design is complete. We're starting a prototype run of 500 toasters tomorrow. I'm starting to wrap up the engineering effort. My new assistant did a wonderful job.

Day 38: Suddenly, a major snag happened. Bob called me into his office. He seemed very uneasy as he informed me that those on high feel that the Acme 2000 is obsolete – something about using springs in the silicon age. I reminded Bob that the consultants had looked at using a microprocessor but figured that an electronic design would exceed our cost target by almost 50% with no real benefit in terms of toastal quality.

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"With a computer, our customers can load the bread the night before, program a finish time, and get a perfect slice of toast when they awaken," Bob intoned, as if reading from a script.

Day 48: Chuck CompGuy, the new microprocessor whiz, scrapped my idea of using a dedicated 4-bit CPU. "We need some horsepower if we're gonna program this puppy in C," he said, while I stared fascinated at the old crumbs stuck in his wild beard. "Time-to-market, you know. Delivery is due in three months. We'll just pop this cool new 8-bitter I found into it, whip up some code, and ship to the end user."

Day 120: The good news is that I'm getting to stretch my mechanical-design abilities. Chuck convinced management that the old spring-loaded, press-down lever control is obsolete. I've designed a 'motorized insertion port', stealing ideas from a CD-ROM drive. Three cross-coupled, safety-interlock micro switches ensure that the heaters won't come on unless users properly insert the toast. We're seeing some reliability problems due to the temperature extremes, but I'm sure we can work those out.

Day 132: New schedule: We now expect delivery in three months. We've replaced the 8-bitter with a Harvard-architecture, 16-bit, 3-MIPS CPU.

Day 172: New schedule: We now expect delivery in three months.

Day 194: The auditors convinced management we really need a graphical user interface with a full-screen LCD. "You're gonna need some horsepower to drive that," Chuck warned us. "I recommend a '386 with a half-meg of RAM." He went back to design Revision J of the PC board.

Day 268: New schedule: We now expect delivery in three months. We've cured most of the electronics' temperature problems with a pair of fans, though management is complaining about the noise. Bob sits in his office all day, door locked, drinking Jack Daniels. Like clockwork, his wife calls every night around midnight, sobbing. I'm worried about him and mentioned my concern to Chuck. "Wife?" he asked. "Wife? Yeah, I think I've got one of those and two or three kids, too. Now, let's just stick another Meg of RAM in here, OK?"

Day 320: We gave up on the custom GUI and are now installing Windows CE2e. The auditors applauded Chuck's plan to upgrade to a Pentium with 32 Mbytes of RAM. There's still no functioning code, but the toaster is genuinely impressive. Four circuit boards, bundles of cables and a gigabit of hard-disk space. "This sucker has more computer power than the entire world did 20 years ago," Chuck boasted proudly.

Day 384: Toastal quality is sub-par. The addition of two more cooling fans keeps the electronics to a reasonable temperature but removes too much heat from the toast. I'm struggling with baffles to vector the air, but the thrust of all these fans spins the toaster around.

Day 410: New schedule: We now expect delivery in three months. We switched From C++ to Java. "That'll get them pesky memory-allocation bugs, for sure," Chuck told his team of 15 programmers. This approach seems like a good idea to me, because Java is platform-independent and there are rumors circulating that we're porting to a SPARCstation.

Day 530: New schedule: We now expect delivery in three months. I mastered the temperature problems by removing all of the fans and the heating elements. The Pentium is now thermally bonded to the toast. We found a thermal grease that isn't too poisonous. Our marketing people feel that the slight degradation in taste from the grease will be more than compensated for by the "toasting experience that can only come from a CISC-based, 32-bit multitasking machine running the latest multiplatform software."

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Day 610: The product shipped. It weighs 72 lbs. and costs \$325. Chuck was promoted to CEO.

On 3/7/2007 1:45 PM, The digits of Rich Grise's hands composed the following:

Received in the email:

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A brand new store has just opened in New York City that sells husbands. When women go to choose a husband, they have to follow the instructions at the entrance: "You may visit this store ONLY ONCE! There are six floors and the value of the products increase as you ascend the flights. You may choose any item from a particular floor, or may choose to go up to the next floor, but you CANNOT go back down except to exit the building!"