

# /dev/random

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**O**n a lark (it was big for a lark, but I still had to scrunch up a bit) I applied for an infosec manager position at Facebook. I got to the “upload your resume” segment and there was also a statement indicating the desirability of a code sample. The job is not a software engineering job, but apparently their world consists of nails and code is the hammer. I scratched my head, as I haven’t written any substantial code in at least seven years, and finally included a Perl module I coded in 1999. I don’t even know if it will run.

I hope it gives them a good laugh, if nothing else. I did put in the comments that I’m a security geek, not a coder. They wanted me to solve a programming puzzle, too, but I ignored that part. They tried to convince me. I ignored them even more vigorously: they don’t know that I solve all puzzles by cheating, and I intend to keep it that way. So, no Facebook job for me. It’s probably for the best. I would be tempted to give users an encryption option, so that only those friends with whom they choose to share the key could read their posts. To everyone else they would look like shared photos of cats, funny mash-ups involving celebrities and/or cartoon characters, and long misspelled diatribes on half-understood government policies. One might be excused for thinking that feature has already been implemented.

The Facebook adventure put me in mind of other avant-garde hiring practices I’ve encountered, and they’ve almost always sprung from these high tech Silicon Valley-esque outfits. Do left coast companies vie for “Weirdest Hiring Process”? Is there an industry award for that now? Is it the sun and sand, or just the ready availability of pharmaceutical enhancements? Does an abundance of sea gulls, or the aerial poop thereto appertaining, affect the rational thought processes? Can someone hand me a sparkling mineral water?

Give me the traditional interview questions any day. I have my answers prepared.

Q: “What do you consider your strengths?”

A: “I can eat an entire box of Nutri Grain bars in one sitting. Two, if I have milk.”

Q: “What about your weaknesses?”

A: “I have never made it all the way through the third box without getting sick.”

Q: “Where do you want to be in five years?”

A: “Sitting on the beach in St. Thomas. Actually, that’s where I want to be next week, too.”

Q: “Why do you think you are the best candidate for this position?”

A: “Because I have the largest collection of emails and text messages between you and the girlfriend your wife doesn’t know about.”

Tallying ho (that sounds like a gardening store owner taking inventory, doesn't it?), lately I've been pondering the expansion of virtualization to other areas of daily life. What if you could, for example, instantiate a cheery, optimistic virtual mien over the rotten, grouchy virulence of your personal underlying operating system? Your popularity would soar even as your indictments declined. It would revolutionize Hollywood, too. A director could take generic thespians and run whatever virtual personalities on them the script calls for. Easy-bake actor-in-a-box: no need for messy, time-consuming auditions. Spouse mad at you? Pop in the "Irresistible Lover" LCM (Loadable Cranial Module) and you'll be making beautiful music together in no time.

Pointy-haired bosses are so much easier to handle when you load up the "Respectful Obedient Employee Secretly Plotting To Do You In" module (also known as the "Eddie Haskell"). Maybe choose the "Terminator" one when the visiting in-laws have outstayed their welcome: "If you want to live, you will leave now. And do not come back" in a thick Austrian accent is sure to get the message across. Harsh, yes, but effective. You gotta be firm sometimes.

I'm wondering where the portable computing device market is heading next. At some point in the very near future the miniaturization craze is going to slam with considerable force into the wall of human optical limitations (and the video will undoubtedly appear minutes later on Live Leak). It doesn't matter to me if my postage stamp-sized Ultra-absorbent iPad Mini (sorry, got my pads mixed up) has quad octo-core processors and a 1760 x 1140 HD screen if the pixels are only one photon in size. We're rapidly approaching the point where all I/O will be have to be done via Bluetooth or something equivalent—presuming they can continue to produce smaller and smaller transceivers—because the CPU housing itself is too small to accept any physical cable adapter or memory stick visible to the naked eye. I call this entire class of devices "Barbie boxes."

Rolling without discernible segue into an entirely different topic, there's an interesting discussion underway on a mailing list to

which I belong concerning "back doors" in software intended for forcing updates. Rather than leap directly onto that philosophical log jam, though, I will approach it in my customary oblique fashion. If software can have back doors, what other architectural features might it possess? Well, windows to begin with. I suppose the screen intensity control could then be thought of as blinds or drapes. Cleaning said windows would be removing unnecessary icons, of which I have more than my share at present. I've always believed that one of the primary reasons Microsoft decided to call its graphic interface "Windows" is that it was such a pane to run. "Scraping the bugs off your Windows" then takes on a whole new meaning as a euphemism for installing a patch.

In this architectural scenario the firewall would of course be the front gate, where packets drive up and push the little buzzer to be let in. Now, the roof keeps out rain, and too much rain is a flood, and the thing that prevents floods (syn, for example) would be the...firewall. So, apparently in this house your visitors enter through the roof. I guess they get to the ground floor by climbing down the TCP/IP stack.

It's become glaringly obvious to me that this analogy is not built on a solid foundation. Further, the timbers are just as apparently rotten; the entire construct has collapsed from its own weight. I hope everyone got out all right.

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, the product of a labored metaphor is stillborn. At least it didn't suffer. My apologies if the same cannot be said for you.

P.S. I would be remiss if I didn't occasionally toot my own horn here, so if you're a humorous fantasy fan, look for *Goblinopolis* on bookshelves both virtual and real. Buy a copy for yourself and everyone you've ever met. I might even sign them if I can remember how to write in cursive.