

The Embedded Muse 73

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Editor's Note

After a hiatus of some months for summer break, the Muse is back to life. It's been an interesting and refreshing summer, but somewhat shocking to come back to the seeming collapse of ethics in big business.

Coincidentally, a column I wrote months ago for the August 2002 issue of Embedded Systems Programming (on-line now at www.embedded.com) discusses engineering ethics and has generated quite a bit of feedback from readers. Responses range from "the boss or market decides if our inventions are misused" to "it's our responsibility to try and build things that can be used only for good purposes."

Resources and Links

The September issue of Software Development magazine just came out and has some interesting articles. At this writing the web site still features August's issue, but no doubt they'll soon have these articles on-line at www.sdmagazine.com. A couple of interesting statistics from the article: productivity peaks in one's mid-30s, declines... and then peaks again in the mid-50s! I look forward to being smart again in the future. Another: the demand for software developers should double by 2010. That's great but little consolation to those who need a job today.

For those downsized by the really lousy and disturbing economy, a feature offers 50 tips for finding a new job or career. Much is trite, but there are a few good ideas worth trying.

Also check out the "Ring of Revision", an article discussing and listing numerous version control software programs. I'm amazed how many developers still don't use a VCS, the first line of defense against lost code and mixed-up versions. I always tell organizations that the first step to improving their development efforts is to install – and use – a version control package. This article lists and discusses a dozen products, ranging in cost from free to an awful lot of money.

There's an interesting development methodology called "Evo" (for Evolutionary Delivery) documented on the net by Niels Malotaux at <http://www.malotaux.nl/nrm/pdf/MxEvo.pdf>. It's not so much new but is nicely packaged and worth reading. Niels, like so many others, believes in turning a project into many

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short (2 week) micro-projects. At the start of a micro-project the team commits to what can be done within two weeks, and then does it. At the end, they repeat the process, rescheduling and replanning, then doing the work. It's tough on management because no one can honestly commit to a schedule up-front. But since we're always late, anyway, perhaps that's just admitting the truth.

Check out Michael Barr's column called #include which discusses the new book "Practical Statecharts in C/C++" by Miro Samek. I'm still working though the book but am very impressed with the approach. It seems there's a slow but noticeable groundswell developing in favor of state machines for many embedded systems. In addition to this fascinating book, several companies now market products for the embedded market that build state machine code. For example, IAR (www.iar.com) offers their visualSTATE product that transforms graphical statecharts into C code – it looks really cool.

Thought for the Week

The Ultimate Tool Kit: WD-40 and Duct Tape

Instructions:

1. If it doesn't move, and it's supposed to, use the WD-40.
2. If it moves, and it's not supposed to, use the Duct Tape.

About The Embedded Muse

The Embedded Muse is an occasional newsletter sent via email by Jack Ganssle. Send complaints, comments, and contributions to him at jack@ganssle.com.

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