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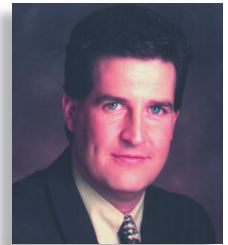
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FROM THE EDITOR

By John Olson, Editor-in-Chief



A Time for Personal Assessment

As we enter the holiday season, I look forward to taking some days off to spend time with my family. Just as Sunday is a day of rest, so the weeks from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day are a time of rest in an otherwise harried year. Deadlines come and go, projects and jobs come and go, but through it all, our families are there to support us, help us through the tough times and celebrate with us during the good times. I've had my own company for many years, so my job has remained the same, but I've seen many projects and deadlines come and go. I work many hours and travel quite a bit, so I frequently have to remind myself that my family is more important than any work task I have...no matter how pressing the task. Unfortunately, I've seen too many people sacrifice their families for a job – or worse, for a single project. What does it benefit a person to excel in a job but lose his or her family?

Though this topic deviates from the technical aspects of our industry, it hits the heart of the supply versus demand issue. Have you found it difficult to find, hire and keep programmers? In our industry, demand for programmers far exceeds the number available. With our universities producing so many thousands of graduates per year, why aren't there enough educated software engineers to meet the demand? A primary reason is that the software industry is growing at an incredible rate. Even though our universities are setting new records each year in quantities of software sciences graduates (mathematics, computer science, computer engineering, etc.), the quantity of new job openings exceeds that number by 20%. That translates into a very large number of jobs, but the gap between supply and demand seems even higher.

Another major reason for the gap between supply and demand is that many of the educated programmers lack the skills needed to be valuable resources on software projects. This effectively removes them from the supply pool. When I interview candidates for job openings, I look for far more than just education and experience. For a consulting position a candidate certainly needs to be skilled technically, but he or she must also be a good communicator, and someone who can be relied upon. I wouldn't put anyone less in front of one of my clients. Unfortunately, I find that many candidates are unable to communicate clearly in English (even if English is their first language), or don't appear to be reliable and stable. The art of communication is something that can be worked on, practiced and improved. Reliability and stability, however, are measured by the interviewer based on indicators in the work and personal life of the candidate. Another term for these factors is *emotional intelligence*. Though many people think that a person's personal life is unrelated to job performance, psychologist and best-selling author Daniel Goleman, in his book *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, indicates quite the opposite. He says that IQ "takes second position to emotional intelligence in determining outstanding job performance." Studies show that unstable home lives often result in unreliability on the job. Overworking can result in a broken home life, which in turn can result in unreliability at work.

Focusing too heavily on work can have severe deleterious effects on other areas of a person's life. The harmful effects are obvious when the imbalance disfavors work. In that situation it's likely that the worker would be fired. When the imbalance favors work, the negative effects are often hard to measure but can have a much greater impact. Regardless of which side the imbalance favors, imbalance is harmful in our work and personal lives.

I encourage you to take some time during this season and contemplate those things in life that are more important than your work, reevaluate your priorities and spend some quality time with your mate, kids, family and friends. Be thankful for what you have, and do what you need to do to keep it. Hopefully, you'll find that you already have an appropriate balance between work, family and other major areas in your life. If not, consider using this holiday season to make some changes. Leading balanced lives makes all of us more valuable assets to our companies and clients. ♦