


we write about the things we build and the things we consume

 written by Emils Solmanis on 14 February 2017 in people

99 luftballons

This one gets pretty meta. You've been warned.

Some recent encounters both online and off have made me think (again) about the bubble that is software these days.

engineers are all the rage

As of right now, I've never been involuntarily unemployed. If anything, telling a company that you want to simply take some time off and chill out before you accept the next offer will usually result in a repeated, higher offer. Being an engineer right now is *amazing*. It's unicorns, rainbows and marshmallows. Everybody wants your stuff. To give you another example, when I first moved to London, I

- landed in Stansted on Thursday
- had an interview with a company on Friday
- had a pretty good offer from them the Tuesday after
- and started the Monday after that

I literally found a brand new job in a brand new city and started in the position within practically one working week. The fact that I didn't have a bank account yet, or that my National Insurance number would only arrive 6 weeks later, didn't stop anyone. That experience is not unique or particularly unusual either. It's just what being a software engineer is right now.

And it gets to you. It gets in your head, and you develop some vaguely narcissistic and arrogant tendencies. Going down that path is very easy when everybody wants you. You feel on top of the world, and everything and everyone around you seems to be less significant. It becomes very easy to convince yourself that the people paying their way through uni via bar jobs are just stupid, when you've been raking in piles of cash by freelancing since you've been a teenager. Why wouldn't *everyone* do that, after all?!

Or you start thinking that unemployed people are just lazy. There are so many jobs after all, *surely* it's not *that* hard to find one. I mean, yes, it takes you about a week, you can see how it might take someone maybe a month of active searching, but it shouldn't be **that** hard, right?

I know all that because I've been there, and it took some serious self-reflection to snap out of it, but talking to some people like that recently was a somewhat jarring reminder of the ridiculous elitism going on in the industry.

the five whys

The discussion to be had with yourself there is similar to the [principle of 5 whys](#).

First of all, think about how you got where you are. Who taught you, who supported you all the way through the nightmares of learning how to code (and later, actually engineer). Remembering how you got to where you are and what it took is important. Understanding that no, you did not, in fact, get this far on your own does wonders to trim that ego down.

Second, I think **everyone** should have some basic understanding of the economy. Right now, the demand [vastly outstrips](#) the supply of engineers. **That** is the reason you get an obscene salary, not the fact that somehow building sites containing a bunch of cat videos is incredibly valuable. Again, it's trivial to convince yourself that what you do is absolutely crucial to the world, because surely no one would be paying you six figures, giving you free lunch, and allowing you to generally [slack off](#) for much of your working hours if it wasn't important. No, the real reason is that there are 10 jobs for every (decent) engineer, and everyone wants you to build their thing. Trust me, the world will keep spinning if Facebook disappeared one fine day. Same for YouTube.

You have a very specific, niche skill that's in *extremely* high demand. That's it. You're not that different from a plumber. If we somehow constricted the supply of plumbers (imagine requiring a uni degree, certification, whatever else), the supply of plumbers would dwindle and you'd be paying a fortune to have your loo unclogged. And, yet again, it wouldn't be because it was particularly difficult to do.

nothing else mattress

With this I want to encourage everyone in tech to *really* think about what it is you do. It's very easy to think that you're awesome and everyone else is just thick, but it is exactly the sort of elitism that gives tech a very bad rep — yes, if you ever speak to anyone outside tech, you'll realise people, as a rule, tend to not like us techies.

I want you to think hard about what it is you do. For the most part, it's likely to be some form of cat video site. We at MetaBroadcast do TV. Not far off. I mean, we're pretty good at it, and entertainment is certainly important, but does me being paid multiples of a [junior doctor](#) for working about half the amount mean that I'm somehow a better human being? Or that my work is actually more important in any way? I'll let you answer that one yourself, hopefully after analysing carefully why that situation exists.

What about you? Talked to any fun people lately? Let us know in the comments!

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