



OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Where are all the nerds?

It defies the law of supply and demand. It's been that way for 17 years, with no end in sight.

There just aren't enough techies to fill tech jobs. Why? The prevailing theory is that most techies are nerds, and there just aren't enough nerds to go around.

There are 200,000 jobs begging for someone who understands what a "server/client implementer" or a "UNIX administrator" means. Starting pay is \$50,000 and up. Employment should grow from 1.5 million jobs to 2.6 million in the next eight years.

For those with proven computer skills, headhunters are at the door daily, offering 20 per cent and 30 per cent raises if they will change companies. More than any other industry, information technology lets kids make their mark at an early age.

Ah, but surely supply will catch up with demand and by the time our kids are ready to look for a job, there will be a glut. Wrong. It will be a long, long time before there can be a glut, for several reasons.

First, computer technicians are needed by virtually every medium and large-sized business, and even many of the smaller companies. More than 1 million computer technicians are employed by non-tech companies, from convenience store firms to oil exploration companies. So tech companies now have to compete with a huge and growing body of non-tech firms for the talent.

Second, a new tech product is developed every seven minutes. Technology is expanding 30 per cent every year, so everything you learn is obsolete within about five years. There is, and will continue to be, a need for people trained in the newest technologies.

With this rosy picture, kids must be climbing over each other to get into computer science programs in high school and college. Parents are doing their part — every parent I know is encouraging their child to embrace computers, love them, learn their every nuance.



Psychology in the '90s

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

Yet the number of kids earning bachelor degrees in computer science or electrical engineering has dropped 40 per cent in the last 10 years. Why? A survey out of the University of California at Berkeley is quite telling.

They interviewed kids at different grade levels and asked them what they wanted to be. The top choice of third graders was to be a teacher. Sixth graders wanted to be athletes, ninth graders wanted to be entertainers and 12th graders offered "I don't know" as a career choice most often (with medicine coming in a distant second). Computer careers were ranked near the bottom of the list at every grade level.

Why are computer jobs so far down on the list? Because these kids think of computer technicians as geeks and nerds. In fact, they drew pictures of computer technicians with buck teeth, glasses, hair going in every direction,

pant legs rolled up, wearing socks that didn't match.

Even kids who enroll in computer science programs often drop out. The typical reason is, "The money is good, but the other students are really weird and I don't want the solitary existence of a computer technician."

In the final analysis, the computer sciences have an image problem. There are tons of jobs, good jobs. We need to explore what a nerd really is. We need to help our kids prepare for careers in the information technology era, without turning them into unhappy people in the

"For those with proven computer skills, headhunters are at the door daily, offering 20 per cent and 30 per cent raises if they change companies."

DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER



I'm sure glad it's all over



Reaume with a View

with BRAD REAUME

It's not that I like incurring wrath and loathing, it's just that some things about the recent World Cup need to be said.

Ethnic celebrations in Toronto and other major Ontario cities happened after every game. Enough, already.

When it's over, okay, celebrate, close down streets, have some fun. However when Italy or Brazil knocks off Andorra or Ivory Coast, keep it at home.

Italians have the CHIN picnic, there is Caribana, there are Highland games, the Renaissance Festival and Caravan with its multiple national and ethnic pavilions.

At least at one time these World Cup celebrations were rare and spontaneous. Now, a bunch of young drunks hop into a car with fuzzy dice, grab the obligatory national flag, and close down streets. Because the majority of people want to appear ethnically sensitive and tolerant nobody does anything about it.

Closing down roads on a regular basis is ridiculous. Take it to a park.

Try driving around drunk in June because the Blue Jays squeaked out a win and rightly you'd find yourself in the slammer.

On top of that, soccer is a stupid game.

You can point to the fact that these fantastic athletes use only their feet and skulls. Hands, which possess abilities that separate humans from lower forms of life and can perform the most subtle skills a human is capable of, are not allowed in soccer.

Makes you wonder who invented the game and why. Most of a human being's potential skill is not allowed to be expressed in a soccer game.

There are other problems but they at least can

be fixed. In soccer only the referee has access to the clock. Goals are rare but penalty shots are taken so close to the front of a huge gaping net that the distance can be measured comfortably in centimeters.

The offside rule incorporates a floating line and is reminiscent of hockey in the 1920s, before the forward pass was allowed. Offside is enforced very loosely, so loosely that perhaps it shouldn't exist.

Perhaps the worst part of soccer is that a goal is so immeasurably valuable. There is no balance between offence and defence. Soccer is the antithesis of basketball, where a basket is so valuable that scoring itself is not as interesting as how a play develops.

A third concern with soccer is hooliganism. Soccer fans will tell you there is much subtlety in a soccer game. It is too bad there is no subtlety among many soccer fans.

Not everything about soccer is bad. I was pleased to see much less of the fake injury posturing that used to plague the World Cup. Guys used to lie on the field writhing in pain, trying to draw penalties. Now, more often the referee lets the game continue. Players fearing embarrassment and potentially leaving their team short don't go down so fast.

I also like the fact that soccer has no commercial timeouts. It's a problem with North American sports that really bugs me. Go to an NFL game and the players spend most of their time standing around while the TV audience watches commercials. NHL games stop entirely for several minutes each period so TV sponsors can flog their wickets. Major League Baseball has enough natural breaks to accommodate TV but they now adorn stadiums with advertising, even to the point of having rotating advertising signs behind home plate.

In the end it makes you want to simply forget professional sports and just follow a local team.

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D

by
Steve
Nease

