

## Preface

This book applies to you.

If you are a corporate programmer, this book could save your professional life. If you don't read it, you may well become one of the many who have been laid off as programming work is shipped offshore. Or you may be the one downsized in your department in favor of programmers your IT director considers more innovative and productive.

Are you scared yet?

Good.

Your career is on the line.

### What You Will Learn

I have mentored, or observed, programmers who became millionaires by using the principles and techniques in this book. What they do have, and what you'll need, are innate ability, intense focus, the will to succeed, and an understanding of the principles I set forth in this book.

Make no mistake: this book will show you how to become far more productive and well-compensated than you are now. You'll learn how to deal with the problems you face on the job, whether you're a programmer, an analyst, or a consultant. The book will also point out what not to do—the habits that hurt your ability to make money, earn advancement, or even to stay on the job.

## HOW TO BECOME A HIGHLY PAID CORPORATE PROGRAMMER

You will discover, when you're at work on a project, that learning the language is only a small part of a programmer's job. This book aims to counsel you about all the other things you need to know.

### Why I Wrote This Book

In my forty-some years as a corporate programmer, systems engineer, software developer, co-owner of a software development company, and consultant to many corporations, I have worked with thousands of programmers. I've paid attention to what they do well and what they do poorly. I've seen hundreds of programmers needlessly stuck on the "journeyman" level (meaning that they're average, sort-of-competent workers) when, with a just a little direction and more focus, they could double or triple their income and move up to jobs that are far more prestigious, satisfying, and well paid.

That's why I was compelled to write this book: I've often wished I had the time to help these journeymen pry themselves from their low rung on the ladder. And so, with this book, I have set out to pass along some of the expertise I've acquired in writing computer solutions for hundreds of companies—plus the techniques I've borrowed from other talented programmers. I hope, too, to convey to you the pleasure I get in doing this constructive, highly paid work—and doing it well.

### Tips for Trainees, Guidance for Veterans

Programming is a field of rapid job change. Its practitioners are expected to take many jobs, to move up the ladder constantly—possibly working only a year as a programmer at one place, gaining education, knowledge, wisdom, and experience, then moving quickly higher and higher at different companies. Good programmers grow quickly. This book will show you how to get the right job, acquire the right business knowledge, focus on what's going to be productive for you and the company, and clarify what your next career step should be. (If you're not planning your next career step, you're probably in big trouble.)

## PREFACE

Specifically, I've provided advice for the following groups of programmers:

***For the beginning programmer:*** How to approach and complete projects, establish an intelligent routine, borrow code, meet your manager's expectations, and—most crucial—how to become savvy about your company's business processes.

***For the programmer with a few years of experience:*** How to move out of “dog work” (maintenance) and take on the challenging, high-visibility, high-risk projects that lead to recognition and promotion.

***For the seasoned programmer:*** How to hone your skills beyond normal programming prowess with productivity tools and programming techniques. In short—how to stay at the top of your game.

***For the programmer with an entrepreneurial bent:*** How to evaluate and then master the risks and rewards of a life as a programmer consultant, founder of a software company, or a software inventor.

### Advice From the Experts

You'll find lots of stories in this book, for I've asked some of my most successful colleagues to outline their upward path. Since all of their paths involved a mixture of audacity, talent, ingenuity, and perseverance; I find their tales compelling. My friends and I consider our careers stimulating, rewarding, and actually very easy, because we selected (or fell into) a field we liked, one that was in great demand, and one for which we have not only aptitude but—just as important—the appropriate temperament. I have had the privilege of working with some genius-level programmers who carried me up on their way to the top. And I could not have flourished as a corporate programmer without a nearly unbroken string of excellent and caring programming managers.

## HOW TO BECOME A HIGHLY PAID CORPORATE PROGRAMMER

### A Coding Fix

And for those of you who need a break from all this “career stuff” and need a code fix, I direct you to my Website, *www.harkinsaudit.com*, where you’ll find a challenge—the “Twelve Balls Test,” a logic test often used by IT departments to evaluate applicants’ ability to think clearly. Take the measure of your reasoning power by taking the test; see how long you’re at it before you find the answer.

But come back to the reality of this book. It will change your career.

—*Paul Harkins*  
*December 2003*