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Topic: My first day at DEC (Read 1084 times)

Anker

Newbie



Posts: 20



My first day at DEC

« on: April 09, 2007, 12:42:08 PM »

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I joined DEC in Denmark in 1975. I left my old company because I didn't have the guts to fire an impossible employee of mine, so I quit. The DEC software manager was a former colleague of mine so it was natural that I checked with him whether there might be a job there. "No problem, come on board". While I was at the interview my wife called and let me know that if I wanted to be present at the birth of our second child I better rush back.

I joined the DEC-10 group as a Software Specialist. The only DEC computer I had ever seen was a PDP-11 that they had at the University, but I'd never used it. So the first assignment would be 9 weeks of DEC-10 training in MRO1. My first day was going to be there and by mail I received airline tickets, the worst directions and map of eastern Massachusetts I have ever seen, and the address of the apartment on route 20 in Marlborough that I was going to live in. I'd never been to the US before.

The flight over was uneventful and I picked up my rental car from Avis, a Dodge Dart. It had automatic transmission, which I'd never driven with, and when I stopped at the first intersection my foot automatically stepped on the clutch. It wasn't there, but the brake pedal was and I almost went through the windshield.

With the map in my lap I was able to get on the Mass Pike, and after a while I started getting worried that I had missed my exit. Eventually I decided that I must have missed it and took the next exit and started driving aimlessly around looking for Marlborough. All of a sudden I actually saw a sign pointing to Marlborough. There aren't many of those around, so accidentally finding one was a bit of a miracle. In Marlborough I was able to find route 20 and the apartment building, but there was nobody home in the manager's apartment. I was pretty tired and couldn't think of anything to do than wait for him. It got later and later and still no manager. Eventually some kind soul asked me what I was doing and I was invited in to join a party. After the party ended the manager still wasn't at home, and I was given a couch to sleep on. The next morning, Sunday, at 9 AM I tried the doorbell of the manager's apartment again. This time he did answer and gave me a dressing down for calling on him so early in the morning.

Monday morning I drove to MRO1 and walked into the main lobby. The first thing I was asked for was a badge. Badge? I didn't have one. Fortunately I had been entered into some system, so I was sent up to security to have one made for me. When I finally returned to Denmark I found a badge sitting on my desk.

DEC-10 training was a bit of a shock. This thing was primitive compared to what I was used to. I had been working on Burroughs 6800 systems where you didn't worry about memory limitations and everything was written in high level languages, and here was the DEC-10 with a linear address space of very limited size and the whole OS was written in assembly language. I wasn't the only one shocked and dismayed with the DEC-10. Xerox had just shut their computer division and there were a lot of ex-Xerox engineers in the class, and they kept moaning about how primitive the file system was. About a third of the class quit in the first couple of weeks, but I hung in there and got to love the DEC-10 and the DEC-20 that was about 1 year from announcement.

I shared the apartment with another trainee, Frank Record. We shared a VW bug that we rented from Small Cars of Stow, and he was kind enough to invite me home to his parents in Greenwich, Connecticut several times.

Remember this was in 1975, so my introduction to baseball was the Red Sox almost winning the world series.

Finally the 9 weeks of training was over and I could return home to my family. And to work as a fully trained DEC-10 software specialist.



[Report to moderator](#) 24.34.57.215 (?)

Bob Moore

President DEC
Connection
Board
Newbie
★
Posts: 30



Re: My first day at DEC

« **Reply #1 on:** April 12, 2007, 06:35:06 AM »

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Thanks, Ankr, that was a neat read of what is now a memorable time for you.
Glad you are involved with where this organization is going.
Bob Moore in burlington



« *Last Edit:* April 12, 2007, 06:37:13 AM by Bob Moore »

[Report to moderator](#) 72.70.33.215 (?)

C Robert Moore

SEHarker

Newbie
★
Posts: 17



Re: My first day at DEC

« **Reply #2 on:** November 14, 2007, 08:28:27 AM »

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Anker enjoyed your description. Here is mine.

Unlike your experience, in January, 1974, living locally, I had just been released from a lowly "Data Entry Clerk" position with a firm in Waltham, MA. At the time, the 1973 "Gas crisis" had impacted the firm's resources to the point where management had to make hard Personnel decisions. Being one of the last hired, I became the first fired. Being newly married, and knowing about DEC through various Headhunters, I grabbed at the first entry-level, employment opportunity to show up in the local papers.

It happened to be an ad for an "Operator Trainee" situation which – as it turned out – required working in a small data center facility DEC had outfitted with a KI-10 (with 128K of interleaved Memory, I was later told in awed tones) and several banks of RK04's in a large classroom belonging to, and leased to – of all places - the Harvard Business School.

A headhunter I knew, under the threat of bodily harm, arranged an interview with the hiring manager, Marvin Levin. I must have made a decent impression on Marv as the day after the headhunter called me back to tell me I was hired and I was to call Marv. A call to Marv confirmed his decision, and I was told to report the next day to the Personnel Dept. at the Mill in Maynard, before reporting for the second shift at the HBS.

I recall the next day (February 18th 1974) dawned cloudy with a dark overcast and the threat of rain or snow. Not a good omen, but living in Reading, and having no idea where Maynard was I, nevertheless, jumped into my trusty '73 Volvo (a "Standard shift", Anker), stopped at a local Gas station to purchase a map and, about 8:00 AM, merged into traffic on Rt. 128 with self-confidence abounding. Much later I would learn the trip should have taken about 1 hour, but that day it took 3.

Finally, arriving in Maynard (the town you can't get to from anywhere), I remember being immediately surprised and intimidated by the size of the Mill. Finding a metered parking spot I dropped about 1 hour's worth of coins (a sign of total ignorance) and with a deep breath, followed signs to the Main entrance.

Speaking with the receptionist, I discovered I was in luck. The personnel office (in 1974) was just "around the corner and down the hall". Taking the corner, I realized she had neglected to tell me how far down the hall, which looked about a half mile long. Eventually, finding the office I went in expecting reams of forms to fill out – I wasn't disappointed. Finishing the task, I handed them in, beaming with success, and about to leave when I was told I had to stop in at the Health Office (Sigh!). An hour had past, but thinking I could still beat the clock (NOT!), I dashed out to the parking meter! A ticket was on the windshield. Making the mistake of putting it in my pocket, and more money in the meter, I returned to the Personnel office to get additional directions.

Let it not be said that Digital was not organized in 1974. The facility map the receptionist gave me was excellent. It was full of various colors, names of buildings and floors, and of groups to be found on each. If you could visualize it in three dimensions, or – if you had been a Mill resident for several years, they were perfect. I couldn't, and I wasn't, and the verbal directions I had been given at Personnel, quickly faded, as I tried to find my way to a location I was told was "near the Cafeteria" before panic set in (the location actually seemed logical, as I later discovered, after a lunch).

Eventually, with the help of many kind offers, I located both, picked up some forms to be returned after a physical (Shudder!), and was preparing to find my way back when the Nurse informed me, if I had not already done so, I had to stop by Security for my Badge (AAAhhhh!). "Their Office is up at the Thompson Street Entrance lobby", she smiled. "Where?" I barely managed to ask, politely.. "Thompson Street", she replied, turning to back to her paperwork. "Where the Hell is Thompson Street?" I asked under my breath as I



Report to moderator 66.189.36.56 (?)

Steve Marino

Newbie



Posts: 3



Re: My first day at DEC

< **Reply #3 on:** January 29, 2008, 05:09:55 PM >

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It was July 5, 1977. Had very mixed emotions that day. Excited about starting my new job. But disappointed that I could not take my wife and new born baby home from the hospital. That day was the longest 8 hours to me. Seemed longer than some of the 12 hour days I worked. Sure miss DEC and the great people that I met in my 17 years.



Report to moderator 72.85.217.204 (?)

Paul Donaldson

Newbie



Posts: 7



Re: My first day at DEC

< **Reply #4 on:** September 09, 2008, 06:27:04 AM >

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Compared to some of the adventures listed here my first day was the proverbial "piece of cake". My entire group -- Channels Marketing in MKO -- was on the west coast at that year's Executive Seminar. I went through the initial New Hire "class" -- such as it was -- and received my badge . All went smoothly. Then I was directed to my cube; the area was devoid of humanity so I had all the time and privacy I needed to poke about and get the 'lay of the land'.

I'd been told by a fellow sales guy at Prime Computer -- from whence I came to join Digital -- to be sure to look up his old pal, Lloyd Nussbaum. I told him I would knowing full well I'd probably never meet this Nussbaum guy; the company was almost 100,000 strong when I joined and finding one guy out of that number was, I was certain, improbable at best. As I poked about it was obvious the area of our cubes was newly arranged, set as if it had been recently arranged from another configuration. The group, it turned out, was in the midst of a move from UPO to MKO. Some individuals -- those who lived in NH -- opted to work out of MKO and save the Mass. income tax. Each cube had the new occupant's name on a piece of paper taped to the wall nearest the entry. Mine was on an aisle at the end of a run of three cubes along that aisle. I was impressed that someone had put my name on the wall; at least I was expected even if nobody was about to greet me!

Ruth Fish soon appeared and walked me through DEC Mail (which I liked better than All-In-1 which we would be forced to adopt in a couple of years) and VAX Mail and how to access the systems I'd need to do my job. She complimented me on how quickly I picked up on DEC Mail (did I mention how much I liked that application?!!!) and told me to call her any time I needed help. She went off on other chores and I played with the system for a while. Then I went exploring. I went over to where Tom Robinson's group was located and met a couple of guys who were headed for California and Executive Seminar the next day. Tom Barrett was in and made me feel most welcome. Rom Robinson and Dan Riordan were there and also welcomed me warmly.

When I came back to the office after lunch -- I lived in Amherst, NH then (and, again, now) -- I walked around the area that would be my 'home away from home' for the next nine years. I walked down the aisle and came back from the opposite direction than I'd heretofore used. That's when I saw it; LLOYD NUSSBAUM written on the 8 1/2 X 11 piece of paper attached to the cube NEXT TO MINE! What a shock! Here I'd figured I'd never talk to -- never mind work in the same group with -- Lloyd Nussbaum and it turns out he would be sitting right next door to me and work as a peer for years to come. In fact, when Lloyd took the SERP I organized his retirement party. He became a true friend and my boys, then little guys, loved to visit his office/cube and play with the funny head he kept on his cabinet. I believe Lloyd is now residing in Delray Beach, Florida. I've missed him since he retired and I left the company to start my own business in 1994.

So, that's about it. My first day was exciting; I'd wanted to work for Digital for years and that first day I'm sure my feet were a foot off the ground all day long. Not only did I have the highest regard for Digital and wanted to be associated with the company, but also was happy to give up an 87 mile (one way!) commute to Prime Park in Natick, Mass. Digital will go down as having been the best job of my career; I still can't believe it doesn't exist as a company any more. Working at Digital was a truly wonderful experience, a ten year 'labor of love'. Some of the people I met over those years became rest-of-my-life friends. Abe Litman, Jack Fleisher, Lloyd, Mony Subramony -- too many to mention for fear of leaving out many.

I'm still in high tech sales and back living in Amherst, NH after a five year stint in Pensacola, Florida. I'm happily divorced, my sons are Cum Laude graduates of UNH, -- '04 and '06 -- (forgive me for bragging there just a tad) and other than having to return to NH due to employment considerations (long story there but suffice it to say that the Florida Panhandle is not a hot bed of well paying jobs) and, while I certainly have no problem living in the



« Last Edit: September 09, 2008, 06:48:12 AM by Paul Donaldson »

Report to moderator  64.140.232.202 (?)

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