



LUNATECH

In search of the perfect programmer

Peter Hilton • 42 KTM • 17 March 2010

The perfect programmer...

**is something a lot of people
have an opinion about**

**Being able to code is the
only non-optional skill
(no code - no software)**

**There are plenty other
things you can be
sufficiently bad at to make
your project fail.**



The perfect programmer is a

**Edsger W. Dijkstra argues
that computer programming
should be understood as a
branch of mathematics**

**Disclosure: I have a degree
in pure mathematics**

mathematician



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Edsger_Wybe_Dijkstra.jpg



The perfect programmer is a

**Computer science has
worked out solutions to
some problems that you are
not going to discover by
yourself**

cf. Steve Yegge

<http://steve-yegge.blogspot.com/>

computer scientist



photo credit



businessman

The perfect programmer is a

There is always a cost and a value, and neither tends to take care of itself

Larry Ellison (photo) started his own company in 1977, after getting inspiration from one of Codd's papers

His personal wealth is now an estimated US\$ 22 billion



The perfect programmer is a

**Most software projects
require more than one
person to contribute.**

**Ideally, everyone would all
spontaneously want to do
the same thing in the same
way, at the right time.**

**Realistically, you need
leadership (not necessarily
a Roman emperor)**

leader



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entrepreneur

The perfect programmer is

**Interesting software is
often new software that
other people do not believe
in yet**

**There is a first person to
have the vision**

**There is also someone who
can get things started**

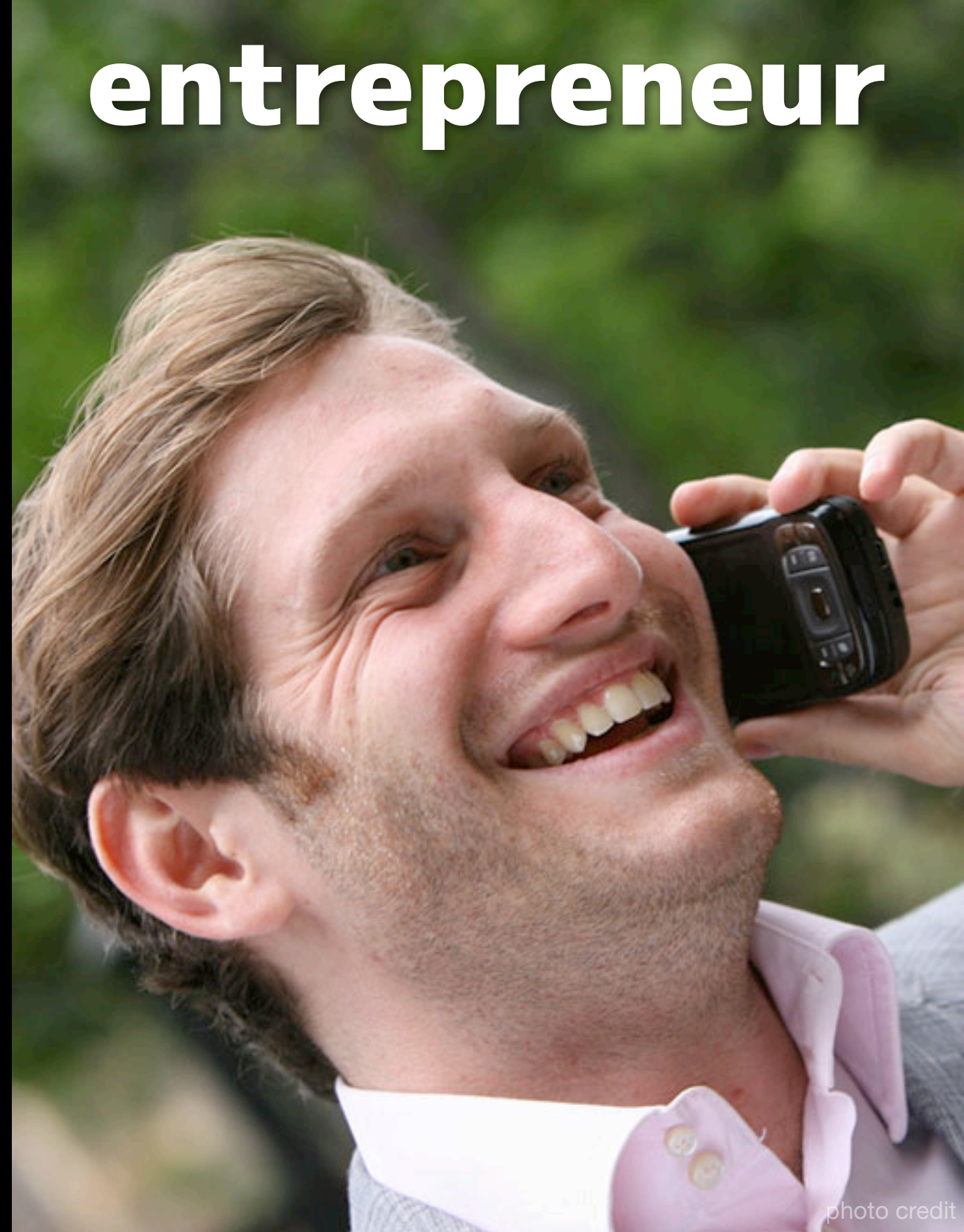


photo credit



The perfect programmer is a

Women are not better or worse, just different

Your team is probably mostly men and worse off because of this lack of diversity and balance

Of course, a women-only environment probably is worse than a men-only one (unconfirmed)

girl



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The perfect programmer is a

**Most software
communicates visually**

**Visual design overlaps with
user-interface design**



photo credit



The perfect programmer is a

When the talent are movie stars, they do not want to be kept hanging around.

Progress every day requires someone to constantly remove obstacles.

film producer



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The perfect programmer is a

Forget theory: get your
hands dirty

You have to be able to
actually get things done

cf. Joel Spolsky's book:
Smart And Gets Things Done

mechanic



<http://www.mckr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/3739366785/>



The perfect programmer is a

**In the age of the mashup
we are actually getting
somewhere with software
re-use and data re-use**

**Licensing issues remain
complex**

lawyer



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The perfect programmer is a

**Projects tend to involve
more people problems than
technology problems**

**The software may be
complex, but at least it
does what you tell it to**

**Human behaviour is more
subtle and complex**

politician



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The perfect programmer is a

**Library science is the art
of information retrieval**

**Internet information
systems are no mere library**

Recommended book:

**'Information Architecture
for the World Wide Web',
Morville & Rosenfeld**

<http://oreilly.com/catalog/9781565922822>

librarian



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/37179449@N00/2923187707/>



The perfect programmer is a

**Programmers communicate
in writing a lot, with
humans as well as programs**

**When you are explaining
something complex, having a
way with words is essential**

**Every software project I
have ever worked on
involved more English than
any other language**

poet



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translator

The perfect programmer is a

Technically, it is easy for software to support multiple languages

However, programmers are not usually able to do the translation

Lack of language support limits software's global adoption, especially on-line



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The perfect programmer is a

Programmers are rarely good at remembering meetings, organising things, expenses, calling people back, booking things, buying things, forms, etc.

Most programmers would love to have a secretary

... but have to make do, and be their own secretary

secretary



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The perfect programmer is a **kung fu master**



- **What is the highest technique you hope to achieve?**
- **To have no software development methodology**



The perfect programmer is a

**Unrelated to programming,
as such, but...**

**A brewer is your Subject
Matter Expert**

**... once in your life, when
your development project is
to implement a Brewery
Management System**

brewer



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The perfect programmer is a
mirage in the desert of
human imperfection



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The perfect programmer is a

No one person is everything

**A multi-disciplinary team
can be, collectively**

**The smaller your team, the
smaller your niche**

**The best programmers are
not the top 1% of coders**

**The best programmers are
good at more than one thing**

multi-disciplinary team



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