
Subject: Re: Work at RSI!

Posted by [davidf](#) on Tue, 11 Apr 2000 07:00:00 GMT

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Patrick Broos (patb@astro.psu.edu) writes:

> I find this opportunity at RSI to pose a moral dilemma.
> I enjoy programming in IDL, I've wanted to work again in Colorado for
> quite a while, and I happen to have experience relevant to RSI's need.
> However over the years I've come to believe that the environment/culture
> at RSI does not tend to place a high enough value on scientific integrity,
> i.e. getting correct answers from IDL applications, or on their customers'
> time. For example:
>
> * To this day RSI has not done anything about the corrupt scientific result>
> its customers may produce using the multi-flawed random number routines.
> (Just three weeks ago another person reported to this newsgroup that they
> were burned by this.)
>
> * RSI seems to make no effort to notify its customers of even routine and
> straightforward bugs that are known and fixed. They have twice now given
> me a revised version of `cw_form.pro` when I pointed out a bug but made no
> effort to make such improvements available to the rest of their customer base.
> I'm sure the people at RSI are perfectly nice people. They would probably
> explain that by not doing the things `_I_` think they should be doing, they
> are able to accomplish other important stuff. Fine ... everyone has to set
> priorities.
>
> So, when you disagree with a company's behavior, should you avoid working
> there (as a protest, and for your own personal happiness), or should you
> try to work there (making an effort improve the place)? This is an entirely
> academic question, of course, designed to stimulate interesting newsgroup
> discussion, since RSI would not likely hire me now anyway. :)
> I like the IDL language generally, but just wish RSI would do some things
> better. Perhaps you, gentle reader, just wish I would stop complaining.

I feel vaguely disturbed by this letter, and I am having difficulty putting my finger on exactly why I feel that way. I think because it implies a sort of malicious intentionality to RSI's collective behavior that I don't think is justified.

Lord knows, I've had my differences of opinion with people at RSI. And I've chided them publicly on numerous occasions on matters, such as informing their customers of bugs and improvements, that I think they can do much better than they are now. But this letter seems to imply that they don't give a damn about their customers. And I know for a fact that is simply not true.

I suppose there could be people at RSI who would just blow customer complaints off, but I don't know them, and I know plenty of people at RSI. Sure, I would be disappointed if I reported a bug on several occasions and it was not fixed. But rather than believe there were sinister or malicious motives involved, I would find it easier to believe that the company simply did not have adequate systems in place to track customer comments. No company, RSI among them, could survive long by ignoring problems with their software.

I wouldn't presume to tell you whether you should work for a company like RSI. Certainly there are politics and personalities to contend with, just like there are in any other company. I can tell you that there are a heck of a lot **worse** places to work than RSI. I think they both need and want good people who work hard and care about what they are doing and who they are serving.

I know that the years I spent there are among the most satisfying and rewarding of any of my professional life. Mostly because I was given the opportunity to do what I thought was right for both the customer **and** the company. Although the culture has changed some in the years since I left and as the company has grown, I still think it is a place where individuals with vision and purpose can make a difference.

Cheers,

David

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David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting

Phone: 970-221-0438 E-Mail: davidf@dfanning.com

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