THE HANSEN REPORT ON AUTOMOTIVE ELECTRONICS

Editorial Notes

Dear Reader,

Carmakers and automotive suppliers worldwide are experiencing massive shortages of qualified software developers. It is a huge challenge with enormous opportunity costs as the transition to software-centric automotive development is delayed. The shortages are made more severe by high rates of turnover due to the great demands placed on existing workers, who are asked to do too much, and by attractive offers to work elsewhere. Recruiting is made even more difficult because the auto industry has to compete with numerous other industries that are also facing talent shortages. This is not a problem that will soon go away.

How can Detroit, which according to Glassdoor pays anywhere from 69.000 to 110.000 US-dollars for software engineers, possibly compete for talent with Palo Alto (home to Tesla), which pays 100.000 to 190.000 US-dollars for software engineers? One possible answer comes from Gergeley Orosz, a blogger who writes about software engineering and big tech. In his blog article, "What Silicon Valley 'Gets' About Software Engineers that Traditional Companies Do Not," he writes: "I've noticed that Silicon Valley companies consistently get a few things that their traditional counterparts fail to either understand or implement in practice – especially in Europe. These are practices that result in faster innovation at a company level, better professional growth for engineers, and just better 'utilization' ..."

In other words, Silicon Valley-like companies create more leverage from each software engineer. Orosz outlines several characteristics of companies that get high work output per engineer. They give their engineers autonomy and let them see the big picture. They hire not only for technical skills but also for communication and problem-solving abilities. They invest in a less frustrating developer experience by making sure that engineering tools and processes are reliable and up to date. Essentially it comes down to this: "Any company who wants to compete in pay for [the best] engineers needs to create high leverage where the value brought in by these engineers exceeds their salaries."

Cordially,

Paul Hansen
Editor

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