

Developing in a hostile environment

Asked 15 years, 10 months ago Modified 15 years, 8 months ago

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3



OK, not *that* kind of hostile. I'm curious to hear how people deal with developing on big corporate networks that mandate all kinds of developer-unfriendly services and policies on desktops (think ProQuota, over-zealous virus scanners, no local admin, no access to SO). I've previously used virtual LANs used effectively, or completely seperated parallel networks, but these aren't always practical. Any other tips?

development-environment

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edited Apr 6, 2009 at 16:24

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Jim Arnold

10 Answers

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The most important thing (if possible) is to recruit support from your boss.

8



Unless he's a PHB, he will often understand the impact of these restrictions on you, your team, and indirectly on his success. If the requests are reasonable, he can provide the buffer if you do go against IT. In addition, if the entire team or other developers seek the same policies, this "group bargaining power" can be used to create special policies.

Generally speaking, large corporations are over-zealous about legal issues and information security. However, IT departments generally hate dealing with numerous requests for support from the same person. Sometimes, if you show a clear harm to productivity from a project (e.g., you use a lot of temp files and the anti virus hits them), or that your program has to be installable from administrator mode, they will sometimes reach a compromise. You may have to sign something stating you would not use an administrative access on your machine to install illegal software, but you'd still get admin.

In the few cases I have gone for job interviews (I'm mostly in academia but worked some in the industry), one of my greatest concerns was the amount of control I had about my computing environment, from hardware, to software, to administrative rights. If I cannot be trusted as a developer to manage my own windows box, I don't feel I should be trusted with a mission-critical system.

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answered Feb 1, 2009 at 19:24

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Very true. Get on the good side of IT, as well as (nicely) bug them about installing apps/making changes to your system, and you're almost guaranteed to get more freedom. At my last job, they even helped me scrounge up parts to build a new server I could run. – [Richard Levasseur](#) Feb 1, 2009 at 20:35



6



I haven't tried this myself, but I once saw someone say that the central IT gave in and let him administer his own workstation, after he complied with the policies by submitting to them a change request form with a list of the first 300 things he wanted changing on his workstation.



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I can't remember where that was, but I think it was actually 300 individual change request forms, with one change per form (as mandated by policy). – [Adam Bellaire](#) Feb 1, 2009 at 19:53



Anything that interferes with you doing your job is good to bring up in a meetings.

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Ex:



- This Virus Scanner runs 4 times a day while I am at work. During that run my compile times take 5 times as long, and the use of my other development tools is brought down to a crawl.
- The web filters are overzealous. I have attempted to access sites x, y, and z for extra development information, and have been unable. The time it took to find a good resources was doubled because of this.

And so on.

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edited Feb 1, 2009 at 20:10

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J.J.



2

Work within the (hostile) rules and give up, quit and find somewhere more enlightened or try to change the organization, your choice.



If you decide to try and change things don't go against IT alone, that will just make you the "trouble maker" and you will never get anywhere, try to get support from your boss and other developers - if you can't get support then you may be better off looking for a new job.

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I would explain your issues to your boss and/or sys admin, if they are receptive and agree its a good idea to let you have control over your workstation(s) then problem solved, if not I would walk from the project/job before your probationary period is over.



I was in a similar situation once at a large government corporation and it turned out management not be willing to unlock developers boxes was just the tip of the iceberg of a massive buracracy, the project ended up being a huge failure and by the time I left half of the IT department (not just the project team) had quit.

Just my 2 cents

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Yeah. Leave. If your organization is not willing to give you the normal tools that any normal *professional*

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programmer should be able to use, then it's time to up your networking skills and update your resume.



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answered Feb 1, 2009 at 20:08



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[Cory Foy](#)

1 Perhaps not the good advice that it once was, seeing how the economy is changing for the worse. – [duffyymo](#) Feb 1, 2009 at 21:12

I've been seeing that response more and more. Sure, you have to make smart decisions, and I didn't say to walk out the door. Even in this economy, highly skilled people are in demand - you just may have to do a bit more networking to make it happen. – [Cory Foy](#) Feb 2, 2009 at 14:52

The change is that highly skilled people might not be in demand in your local micro-economy. If you happen to own a house, it's not much comfort to know that higher demand is a several hour drive away, let alone in another state. Houses can be sold, of course - or not... – [duffyymo](#) Feb 2, 2009 at 15:51



Bringing your own laptop with the necessary tools is always a good way to overcome these man-made hurdles

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answered Feb 1, 2009 at 19:24



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Many companies forbid this, especially if you need to go on the network to connect to CVS and such. – [Uri](#) Feb 1, 2009 at 19:25

Unheard of. You don't bring your own machine into any employer that I've ever worked for. – [duffymo](#) Feb 1, 2009 at 21:10



Bring you own laptop but DON'T connect it to the network (and make it obvious that you do not intend to).

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Copy stuff e.g. Visio diagrams over via USB drive.



If they don't allow USB, you can access the internet from outside and email the files. Using OWA via browser sometimes gives you more rights to send files.



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Sounds like they're doing you a favor. Your code is guaranteed to run as a normal user, doesn't try to write to program files or other sensitive directories, is aware of what issues virus scanners bring to the table, and can handle other issues you wouldn't have normally



encountered until installing your apps on a client machine.



As for no access to SO, I'd quit.



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answered [Feb 1, 2009 at 20:12](#)

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[user1228](#)

That's like saying "give the developers the oldest computers you find, so our software will run on this". The developer needs a powerful workhorse, the user-normal environment belongs into a VM or remote system. – [peterchen](#) Feb 1, 2009 at 23:26



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Our workplace required a full virus scan every day, so in the morning, when I hooked my laptop up, it was a 2 hour wait before I could do work.



I finally found a solution. MSVC 6, has a built in debugger. I went into task manager, and picked the mcafee scanner process, and told it to debug. This fired up msvc6, and the scanner froze at a breakpoint. I hit reset, and the problem was gone. About 6 months later they removed the policy and all was good.

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