As with anything, the use of the right tool can make all the difference. In an attempt to gauge an applicant’s attention to detail, this medical start up included the above puzzle to solve. Using Photoshop, I was able to find all the differences, as I got an immediate call back.

When I first received the puzzle, it felt a little humorous that a startup company would use such a method to “weed out” applicants. Upon taking a second look at the puzzle I quickly realized that it is quite ingenious, as the job position is quality assurance and this was definitely required a great deal of attention to detail. I have never been too good at these puzzles; I was decently stumped. At first, I could find maybe 3 to 4 differences at first glance. However, how would I have known that I have found all the differences? The puzzle was not easy, since the differences could be colours or patterns. The time limit of one day was also approaching fast. I was sure that I needed to find a minimum amount of differences in order to get an interview

As engineers, we are very lazy. We will always want to use some tool to make our lives easier, in order to automate tasks or solve complex problems. I knew that if I was indeed a software QA analyst, I would have tools at my disposal that will help me conduct my tests as well as guage my effectiveness. An example is J-Unit and its ability to show line coverage. Having played around Photoshop before I know that there are modifications you can do with images such as overlaying them over each other. I felt that this was a great way to start, as it’ll let me easily compare the smallest difference in pattern. As I was in the process of doing this, I stumbled onto another tool, called difference filter. This allowed me to compare one layer of an image to another, including the colours! This was exactly what I needed.

Needless to say, when I emailed back the recruiter with a screenshot of Photoshop showing exactly all the differences in the puzzle they were extremely impressed. It started a fun conversation about using tools for things that they are not meant for. I told the recruiter that a tool is simply just a tool, it is up to the user on how to use it. As the engineer behind the tool, you can create a tool that is optimized for a certain task, however it may not be the only thing it is used for. The best tools in the world are ones that people are still finding uses for. Think about a rope or an elastic band, it would be amazing to help create a revolutionary tool like that in the future.