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# One Last Compile...

## *How often do you do it?*

I don't mean to get personal, but how often do you compile?

I compile a lot these days. I never used to. In my Delphi youth, compiling was a big step, like asking a girl out. It required a deep breath and a fatalistic acceptance that your role in the universe was to look like a dork. I'd usually compile around lunchtime each day, then spend the afternoon staring gloomily at a series of red lines.

As time went on, I realised compiling was nothing to be scared of. It was really quite easy, even fun. However, asking girls out has remained problematic. In fact, that and reading the Delphi source code remain my two least favourite activities. Within about five seconds of starting you realise you exist in a completely different dimension. I compiled more often, cheerfully watching that line count spiral up on the screen, even coming to know and love the little hiccupy pause Delphi has just before it announces that it's linking. Compiling was positive feedback, concrete proof that the

program worked. You've got to realise that for an insecure guy like me that's quite important. I sometimes convince myself that it's all some kind of plot, and that when I get to that last compile, just before delivery to the customer, Delphi's going to look at me blankly and say, "You wanna do what?" (the parallels in my mind between Delphi and girls are sometimes really quite spooky).

And then, a few weeks ago, I realised that it had got a bit out of hand. I spend more time compiling, and fiddling endlessly with superficial trivia, than I actually spend writing code. Consider a typical day. Mine is something like this. Change font size for flyover hints from 8 point to 9 point. Compile and run it to see if it looks okay. Mindlessly scroll a list box up and down for a few seconds before returning to Delphi and reverting to 8 point. Move list box fractionally to the left to align it more precisely with the bevel component directly above it. Compile to admire new layout. Return to

Delphi and grudgingly write a line of code. Compile to see if there were any typos. Remove typo. Compile. Remove second typo. Compile again. Admire effects of line of code (one of those tricky lines, which synchronise a notebook with a tabset). Repeat, with minor variations, until 5pm, at which point I retire complaining about how tiring it is doing intensive coding all day.

I have a hunch that this is not the most productive way to spend my time. But it's a tough habit to kick. If I haven't got a new version running every two minutes I start getting grumpy. As always, I have absolutely no idea whether this is normal practice or if it's just me being strange. Maybe the rest of you are all really disciplined, and you limit yourselves to three or four compiles a day. Maybe you deliver products which are labelled 'Version 1.0. Build 120.' Me, I deliver products which should be labelled 'Version 1.0. Build 1.27e+16.' Maybe you spend all your time busy writing really complicated code using clever bits of Pascal which I don't understand, like streams and variants. You probably feel a bit smug about that. But I've got to tell you, my flyover hints look way cooler than yours.