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February 12, 2010, *5:23 pm*

Barbie's Next Career? Computer Engineer

By CLAIRE CAIN MILLER

Barbie has come a long way since 1992, when the blond bombshell of a doll was programmed to say, "Math class is tough."

Barbie, whose various careers have taken her from aerobics instructor to supermodel to business executive, will next be a computer engineer, a career chosen by half a million Barbie fans.

Computer Engineer Barbie still has her trademark cascade of blond hair, impossibly small waist, feet frozen on tiptoes to slide into her high heels and a whole lot of hot pink.

She also wears a neon-colored T-shirt with a binary code pattern and carries a smartphone and a Bluetooth headset. Her hot pink glasses will come in handy during late nights coding on her hot pink laptop. Before any one begins complaining, Mattel points out that her accessories were chosen with the help of the Society of Women Engineers and the National Academy of Engineering.

Computer engineer will be the 126th career for Barbie, who turned 50 last year. For the first time, Mattel, which makes the doll, asked people to vote for her career, choosing among computer engineer, architect, environmentalist, news anchor and surgeon.

The choice of computer engineer — a field in which men far outnumber women and in which women's participation has been declining — was announced Friday at the New York Toy Fair.

Lynn Langit, a developer evangelist at Microsoft who teaches programming to girls and works on a Microsoft program called DigiGirlz that teaches girls about technology careers, said she was thrilled about Barbie's next career.

"We can use any sort of positive influence that we have, because the number of girls studying programming is abysmal," she said.

Her only suggestion: that Barbie get a multi-touch netbook next. "If Barbie needs any training, I would be happy to provide it," she said.

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1.
Technic Ally
Toronto
February 12th, 2010
5:45 pm
In your recent story on Stanford computer science cheats, did you consider they may have been writing on their palms?
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2.
Bill L
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Forget it, Barbie, your gig has been outsourced to a hottie in Mumbai...
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3.
a.r.
Los Angeles
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You try fitting more than one line of code on your palm.
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Stoic
New York, NY
February 12th, 2010
7:40 pm
squeaky wheel gets the grease. surely no special interest other than the Society of Women Engineers or National Academy of Engineering has had it in for Barbie over the past decade. Will this stop the decline of women pursuing careers in IT? I highly doubt it. It's a shame these organizations can't identify and understand the root cause of this problem.
Recommend Recommended by 5 Readers
5.
Tom$
Long Island, NY
February 12th, 2010
7:40 pm
If you can't find your kid's Computer Engineer Barbie the next time they're looking for her, better check in the Bangalore toybox.
Recommend Recommended by 5 Readers
6.
Jason Chaw
Austin, TX
February 12th, 2010

7:52 pm

Barbie's an IBMer, working to create a smarter planet! :)

Recommend Recommended by 1 Readers

7.

Eric

Dallas

February 12th, 2010

8:11 pm

But will it come with a set of all-male coworkers?

Recommend Recommended by 25 Readers

8.

Jozeph

in Milan

February 12th, 2010

8:12 pm

... notice her bust-line has significantly decreased in recent years...

Does that mean she's more intellectual?

Can we say that? Bust-line?

Anyway, it's true.

Recommend Recommended by 7 Readers

9.

Walker Peterson

Arroyo Seco, NM

February 13th, 2010

12:58 am

So what's Ken doing these days?

Recommend Recommended by 6 Readers

10.

Bee

OH

February 13th, 2010

12:58 am

@Bill from Michigan

I guarantee you majority of the jobs are not being outsourced. I am a recent grad in computer science and engineering and I did not have any trouble finding a job, and neither do my (engineering) friends. The only jobs that are outsourced are call-center jobs or some web-based jobs.

Recommend Recommended by 5 Readers

11.

Anonymous

February 13th, 2010

12:58 am

What language will she program in? Java, Python, Ruby?

Recommend Recommended by 7 Readers

12.

kim

hawaii

February 13th, 2010

1:23 pm

@stoic The root cause of this problem? You mean the grey cubicles, the all male coworkers, etc? I'm not a member of SWE, but how can it be to blame for not fully grasping the lack of interest? Men would feel

uncomfortable, too, if they only worked with women, and had women bosses. I just wish everyone would stop making things pink for little girls.

Recommend Recommended by 10 Readers

13.

Anonymous

February 13th, 2010

1:23 pm

Who would pay 20 bucks for a plastic doll with a headset? Mattel seems to have forgotten that it markets to seven year olds.

Recommend Recommended by 1 Readers

14.

Fran Taylor

Somerville MA

February 13th, 2010

1:23 pm

If she programs in OpenSCAD or SolidWorks then she can clone herself.

Recommend Recommended by 2 Readers

15.

Anonymous 175536

Boston

February 13th, 2010

1:23 pm

She's old style. If you look at her laptop, she codes in direct binary. You sure she's not a hacker from Russia?

Recommend Recommended by 6 Readers

16.

Em

Austin, TX

February 13th, 2010

1:23 pm

Hey Bill from MI. You are naive in the extreme. I say this as a Senior IEEE member who has trained many an overseas colleague to take our jobs back home with them. The huge tech company where I've spent my career does, indeed, for the first time in its history, have more employees outside of the US than inside. Like Barbie, I'm a (Senior) Software Engineer, and the jobs that we have been moving (for many years now) comprise the entire range of software development. As a recent grad, you will learn the truth eventually. Meanwhile, good luck to you and have fun!

Recommend Recommended by 11 Readers

17.

Carol Guthrie

Darien, CT

February 13th, 2010

1:23 pm

This makes me think of a recent article in the Times about the how women now exceed men in overall college attendance, to their apparent dissatisfaction, at least in terms of dating. Perhaps Computer Engineer Barbie will encourage young women to attend engineering schools, where the education is stupendous and no woman could ever complain about the male to female ratio!

Recommend Recommended by 7 Readers

18.

Fabrizia

Boston

February 13th, 2010

1:23 pm

A computer engineer in America is as unrealistic as Barbie's propositions. Then again, the target audience still believe in the tooth fairy, right?
Recommend Recommended by 4 Readers
19.
Tone
NY
February 13th, 2010
1:23 pm
No, Number 8.

Evidently you have.
Recommend Recommended by 0 Readers
20.
Anonymous
February 13th, 2010
1:25 pm
> What language will she program in? Java, Python, Ruby?

Perl, of course!
Recommend Recommended by 6 Readers
21.
Squid
New York
February 13th, 2010
1:25 pm
Great news. Now if only we could deal with society's reverse sexism and have Ballet dancer Ken....
Recommend Recommended by 8 Readers
22.
Mia
boston
February 13th, 2010
1:25 pm
@Bee that is fabulous you and your friends got jobs, kind of sucks for those of us who DID loose our jobs to design work going overseas. Not the most appropriate place to comment on this but thought I mention that not even engineering jobs aren't safe when places like India and China are churning them out like butter and smart ones too! Good job Barbie, I would very much buy this for my daughter, she is pretty rockin' with her hot pink everything!! We need more problem solvers and students who THINK rather than regurgitate lessons learned in school because the ENGINEER figures out how to get around road blocks not flounder when they realize that they were never taught how to deal with such road blocks in life such as suffering through the economy we have. A good choice for these times! YAY SWE and YAY National Academies!
Recommend Recommended by 5 Readers
23.
bK
brooklyn
February 13th, 2010
6:59 pm
i think anything that brings a new career idea to the attention of a young girl is a good thing.
Recommend Recommended by 4 Readers
24.
robinson
mars, ohio

February 13th, 2010
6:59 pm
"Barbie has come a long way since 1992" Hardly!

She has a hot pink laptop, is unreal even anorexically skinny, and wears designer glasses along with her matching hot pink hair band!

Pull the string and she's likely to say "You betcha" or "Give a shout-out for Alaska!" (Is that rouge or rogue?)

Is this a comfort? "Mattel points out that her accessories were chosen with the help of the Society of Women Engineers and the National Academy of Engineering." They all should be ashamed of themselves!

By the way, which accessories? Does the doll come with pink USB drive, hot pink mouse, and pink cell phone? Will we ever get past the sexism of pink?
Recommend Recommended by 4 Readers
25.
Max Hailperin
St. Peter, MN
February 13th, 2010
6:59 pm
I take it the phrase "a career chosen by half a million Barbie fans" refers to the vote count, in which case it is inaccurate, because it implies that the votes were cast by Barbie fans at a rate of one vote per fan.
Recommend Recommended by 1 Readers

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Minesweeper for the iPhone

Forget Flight Control. Retro gaming is back. - *Jenna Wortham*

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May 2010 U.S. Mobile Subscriber Market Share

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Contributors

Nick Bilton

Lead Bits blogger, New York

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Joshua Brustein

Web Producer, New York

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Matt Richtel

Reporter, San Francisco

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Suzanne Spector

Deputy Technology Editor, New York

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