The prank cursor that resulted in an employee being fired before they even started

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I learned the story of someone who got fired even before they started. It resulted from a prank gone awry.

The perpetrator in question was completing an internship and committed code into the Windows 3.1 code base that was a little prank for the test team: Under a very specific error condition, it changed the index finger pointer to a middle finger.

This was a very rude prank, but the test team would take it in the spirit it was intended.

He then ended his internship and took a two-week break before returning as a full-time employee.

It so happens that the build in question was selected to be a beta release that went out to hundreds of hardware and software companies, as well as beta testers. It wasn't long before some of these copies found their way into the hands of the media, and the rogue cursor reportedly nearly made it into a screen shot in an industry magazine.

As you can imagine, this created quite an uproar, drawing the involvement of senior management. Executives from partner companies were furious that such an unprofessional image could be included in the product, and I'm sure a good number assumed that Microsoft intended the rude gesture to be directed at *them* specifically.

This was a scandal of the highest proportion, and someone must pay.

The manager of this component replied, completely truthfully, "the individual responsible for this regrettable act is no longer with the company."

This helped calm the storm.

The person who made the unauthorized change rejoined the company a few weeks later, as originally planned. I suspect there was a very stern talk as part of the onboarding process.

Bonus chatter: A bug was filed in the <u>RAID database</u> to track the problem and its resolution. In the bug, there was some discussion as to how the issue should be classified. Was it an "off-by-one" error? Or maybe it was a "bad pointer".

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