

The confidential coffee maker was not the only source of shenanigans at the IBM Boca office

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Some time ago, I told the story of the confidential coffee maker, one of the ways that Microsoft employees temporarily stationed in IBM's Boca Raton office rebelled against IBM's strict corporate culture. Since then, some of my colleagues shared additional stories from the IBM office commonly nicknamed *Boca*.

When the Microsoft engineers first arrived in Boca, they were assigned a computer lab equipped with a handful of very outdated computers. The next morning, Steve Ballmer, head of the operating systems division, bought twenty brand new Compaq 386/20 computers and network equipment for the Microsoft engineers to use. They were the envy of the IBM developers as they walked in the door with their top-notch equipment.

Part of the IBM/Microsoft joint venture agreement was that both the managers and engineers would alternate between Microsoft employees going to Boca and IBM employees coming to Redmond. And by some strange quirk of fate, the schedule ended up that during the winter, the Microsoft managers packed their bags for sunny Florida, and during the summer, the IBM managers left behind the oppressive heat of Florida for the pleasant summers of the Pacific Northwest. Meanwhile, the engineers were on the opposite schedule, going to Redmond in the winter and Boca in the summer. Huh. How strange that it worked out that way. Must just be dumb luck.

One of the security measures at Boca was that everybody had to sign in and out of the hardware lab. One of the employees was convinced that this was a complete waste of time since nobody ever checked the signature against the ID badge, and he began signing in and out under more and more absurd false names. Eventually, the lab manager came to the Microsoft office with the sign-in logs and asked the employee to sign in again because "Benito Mussolini? Somebody's gonna notice that."