

R&D developer

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1 Question

How is being a R&D developer different than being a developer?

2 Answer

R&D developers are not focused on shipping. While most developers will work as hard as possible to ship whatever they are building to their customers so that they can get paid, R&D developers focus on delivering answers to questions asked by their clients. This focus on intangible deliverables will frustrate many developers.

Because R&D developers focus on answering questions and not building products, it is very common that code written will not make it in production. If it does, then it will generally be a catastrophe.

Code quality and maintenance are not considered a priority because code is expected to be abandoned once the questions have been answered and the solution has been proven useful.

R&D as it implies, is about finding solutions quickly to problems (research), building a solution (development) and demonstrating the value of the solution. This process is a lot more iterative than building software with (somewhat) clear requirements from the start. Given the novelty of what gets built, it is critical to get feedback early and to act on this feedback. This means that the development horizon (how far ahead things are planned) is very short. As such, you are unlikely to be able to say on what you will be working next month.

Regular development is about applying existing solutions to clients problems. R&D is about finding those solutions and turning them into mainstream solutions.