# Don't forget to replace your placeholder bitmaps with real bitmaps

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The story *We Burned the Poop* reminded me of an embarrassing story a colleague of mine related from earlier in his programming career. During the development of the product he was working on, the programmers needed an image for a comparatively rarely-used piece of the user interface. Since programmers aren't graphic designers, they inserted a placeholder bitmap which would be used until a real image arrived. And since programmers are nerds, they used a picture of a television character who was popular at the time. The testers naturally ran the program through its paces, and when that piece of the user interface appeared with the placeholder bitmap, the testers smiled a little. Time passed, and people became quite accustomed to seeing that television character's face appear when they exercised that little corner of the program. An oddly appropriate face to alert you of an unusual condition. And then the project reached its completion, and the master CD was sent off to the factory for mass duplication. Wait, what about that picture of the television character? When asked why they signed off on testing with a placeholder bitmap, the testers explained, "Oh, we thought that was an artistic decision. The character's personality sort of made sense in that part of the program." Since the image appeared in a comparatively rarely-used corner of the program, it never appeared during product demonstrations. Project management contacted the producers of the television program to see whether they could just license the character's face and avoid having to destroy all of the CDs that had been pressed so far. The producers responded politely, "Thank you for your interest in our television character. Our licensing fees begin at $big-number, plus an additional royalty which varies depending on the nature of the usage, but it begins at $another-big-number per unit."

That amount was far too much, and management had to choose the cheaper of two expensive options: Delivering a new master CD to the factory and telling them to destroy all the copies they had already pressed.