

From a warehouse to a tech company

Speaker 1 00:05

Hi, my name is Will Newsom. And this is the TechStart podcast. And this show we explore the realities of changing careers and getting the tech changes tough and sometimes scary. We make it less so by talking to experts, and ordinary people love their to just. 20 years ago, the highest paying jobs were in healthcare. But in 2023 software developers and data scientists are topping the charts. And unlike some specialties, tech is more accessible to people from all backgrounds and skill sets. But how do you transition from say, working in a warehouse to building the tech that supports the warehouse? I know how complicated it is to switch careers. Many people including me have impostor syndrome about pursuing a career in tech. We're here to show you that whatever you've been doing, working in a hospital brewing coffee, or fulfilling shipment orders, your skills are applicable to the tech world. Today we're discussing how the career condition went for someone who got into tech, after years of manual labour.

Speaker 2 01:14

I would wake up at three o'clock in the morning, you know, drive an hour to get to work to throw boxes and run across the warehouse trying to fulfil orders as fast as we could.

Speaker 1 01:24

This is Jeremy Rivera, just like me, you went to online coding boot camp called TripleTen. He's a climber, a father of two dogs and a very family oriented person. He lives in South Florida. And before getting into tech, he'd been working at different warehouses for three years.

Speaker 2 01:39

Because they actually they paid based on output. So the faster you move, the more you got paid. But that's you know, deteriorating your body performing in somewhat of an unsafe way, typically, but but it is, it is fun. It's a good competitive environment. You know, you always feel like you're on a sinking ship. So everyone's trying to move, everyone's doing their own thing. And we were doing that pretty hardcore during the pandemic, because all the stores needed to get food people were panic buying. So after about, I would say a year, you know, my body's starting to her trying to work out, but I can't work out because I'm tired. You know, I can't really hang out with my friends too much. But then I knew that I needed to do something.

Speaker 1 02:25

When Jeremy was considering a role in tech, he turned to his cousin Julian. Julian worked at TripleTen. And recommended that Jeremy, get this coding bootcamp and get try. We had spoken about coding before, and programming and it was probably early 2020. But at that point, you know, I just needed to work and you know, provide for my parents and my brother to help out the family. And we resume the conversation too, because he had been working remote ever since he started working. He's always been doing some sort of software gig. And I asked him how, how he got into it. And he was a self

taught programmer. But he's like, if you want more structure and money's not really an option, there's a programme TripleTen that has the structure and has the community and he's like if you finish that programme, you would know everything I knew when I started and probably more because you have the structure to fill in those gaps that you would have a few if you learn ever ything on Udemy or YouTube. But what kind of was like the final straw because I know a lot of people that work in warehouses, they still work there to this day so that the one thing that like really set you off?

Speaker 2 03:30

Yeah, I had been I had gotten my associates before I took a break. I have since finished a bachelors unrelated to tech, but I knew the warehouse wasn't for me. I respect labour I like later but like working on my hands. I've always done some sort of contract work or flooring, closets, warehouse work. But I know that wasn't for me, like I have I have creativity and I need a creative outlet. Sometimes, you know when I'm being a mindless meal for 10 hours a day that's not gonna help me be productive warehouse where it's you know, you you go out play basketball with your boys, you sprained your ankle, you're out of work for three months, you know, you you tear your ACL that six months. So it's like you couldn't really do any other extracurricular sports and you had to be really careful because if you got injured that's it like you're out of commission.

Speaker 1 04:27

Well, your cousin I know you said he previously mentioned it to you in the past about like coding and like, I guess the possibility to programming. But did you have any doubts?

Speaker 2 04:37

I think most people will always have that that tentative doubt right before they jump into something new. I did have that initial stuff because I had just gotten married, you know, when I made that. Thank you so much. So now it was like, well, this isn't just my money. This is our money that I would be investing into the future.

Speaker 1 04:59

And how was your experience? I mean, obviously you're working in the software development jobs always seem to be good.

Speaker 2 05:05

Yeah, no, I sometimes think back at it. And I'll be honest, I don't know how I did it. But I had the support of my, my wife and my family and stuff. And I used to wake up at like, 3am, again, drive 55 minutes to the warehouse, I would work from four to maybe to two o'clock pm, I would get out and then I'd drive to university because I told you, I was finishing my degree at the time too. And then I'd have a class at like, 2:30 to 3:30. But then I had another class at like, 6:30 to nine, so and then I wake up at three, I drive an hour back home at so I get home at like 10:30. Take a shower, and then I have to be able to three the next day.

Speaker 1 05:51

Obviously like the like the college degree is pretty fresh on you. What I guess method of education TripleTen Or your degree, which do you think has been more valuable in your life?

Speaker 2 06:04

That's an easy question. My degree is currently sitting in my office on the floor somewhere. But uh, yeah, TripleTen I mean, I that knowledge and experiences significantly, like it pays significantly more rewards than my degree. Granted, I haven't attempted to try to get a job with the degree but I get reached out to by people sometimes on LinkedIn are, you know, other applications. There's a someone trying to interview me this week, and there's a couple other people reached out in the past month. But that's not because of my degree. That's because of, you know, the portfolio and putting yourself out there.

Speaker 1 06:43

Definitely. Jeremy, you mentioned that you switch into tech to have more of a creative outlet. But for others, their main motivator for getting the tech was a salary increase. How did the possibility of making more money factor into your decision to switch careers?

Speaker 2 07:01

To be honest, I I'm very minimalist type of person. Like I don't like to have a lot of things. But the things I do have are typically expensive. So I don't I don't go out. I don't buy clothes. I don't buy shoes every week and stuff like that. I'll buy one pair of shoes and wear it until they break and stuff like that. But those shoes are a couple \$100 You know, I like my laptop to be modern. I like my TV to be modern. I have a PlayStation. I have an attender switch. Those aren't cheap things. And then you know, I just got married, right? So we had to pay for the wedding. For the most part, we did receive some gifts, but you have to pay for that. I'm not out here chasing dollars, but I still have to provide for those who are mine.

Speaker 1 07:46

You're a man of expensive and good taste when I heard PS 5. I actually got married on June 17. So I definitely understand boot camps in general. Obviously, they're they're very cheap compared to college degrees. But um, they're still expensive to most of society. Was there any like doubt in your mind that it wouldn't pay off at some point?

Speaker 2 08:13

I mean, I think everyone at probably all times of their career unless there sociopath is going to have some sort of impostor syndrome. Right, like, so it's, yeah, of course, my you know, your confidence will wane. But you also have to be able to a degree to trust yourself, right? The tools are out there. If you have that new have the ability to put time towards something, I think that will pay dividends more than a four year degree, right? Because anyone could go get a degree, get it paid for by the state, maybe at a scholarship or to get good grades, and then you get into the job you're still gonna have to in politics, and you're right, right. So I think I think hard work will be talent.

Speaker 1 08:58

Let's talk about the process of you getting this job, obviously, the market is very, I wasn't necessarily bad, but it's very selective right now. So like, tell us the process of you finish and practicum. And then you get in your first job.

Speaker 2 09:12

I think when I when I finally started learning JavaScript and programming concepts, I was like, I'm gonna start applying or just start applying anywhere. You look at the job posting, sometimes, it might scare you off a little bit like, oh, man, how do I have, you know, 15 years of experience with the technology that's been out for three. So Right? It's like, how am I gonna get an entry level position, but five to seven years of experience, but a lot of the people who make those postings aren't people in that field, you might have recruiters that just blanket post and that's not what the employer is actually looking for. In the software development software engineering course. There are 15 sprints in the final project. So I would say around like sprint six or seven house to plying

Speaker 1 09:59

Sprints are two weeks periods of work with a number of tasks to complete by the deadline. Most professional IT development takes place in Sprint's so this helps prepare you for the workplace.

Speaker 2 10:08

I applied anywhere, I don't care what tech stack, I don't care what it looked like if it had software and or developer in the name I was applying to it. So I think that's important, too. And I had that encouragement from another tutor, Max Jacobson. He was just like, he's just put yourself out there, keep throwing it out there, keep throwing your application, because and again, it goes back to analytics statistically. And when you look at data, right, you have the you have the normal bell curve, most people are going to lie within that, that 68% You have to push yourself into the extra 14 or the extra standard deviations to to get to that, again, to get to that salary to get to anywhere, right, so I was throwing in, I probably throw in six 700 applications, you know, and sometimes they got back sometimes they didn't. But that's the game right now. So you have to just be consistent. Make sure your resume is up to date. While you're waiting for them. Don't just wait continue to build your skills. So set aside time to apply. Set aside time to continue to learn your craft. Set aside time to build and building is probably the most important.

Speaker 1 11:17

How long like from like when you first started applying and sprint six or seven. How long do you think it took you? How many months? Did it take you to land that job? Or lead that first interview?

Speaker 2 11:27

I'd say about two or three? Because I had actually I got my job right after Sprint 10.

Speaker 1 11:32

Okay. Oh, wow. So you you are 1/3 away? Or two thirds of the way done and Oh, wow. Okay, so that's quick. Let's talk about what went through your head the day you got that offer letter, God's plan.

Speaker 2 11:50

It was it was a mix of you know, it was 100% gratitude, right, gratitude and faith. I mean, knowing that the previous year had been four hours asleep, you know, putting in putting out output that was like, Okay, you can see the fruits of your labour.

Speaker 1 12:09

You were doing a lot you weren't just working. Life was life was massively different. Like, like, you had a lot of stress a lot of, I guess burdens. I wouldn't call them burdens, but a lot of responsibilities. How does life look now compared to life a year ago?

Speaker 2 12:24

I think I gained like 10 pounds. Right? I'm not moving. I'm not moving quite as much. Now. That's changing. I just lost four more. But it's, uh, it's nice, right? Um, I get to sleep. I probably get like, literally, I have, I have a ring that records my sleep. And the average last year was about like five and a half asleep. And that's the average, right? So you're considering weekends as well, where you might sleep the entire day, but the average was about five and a half. Now. Now I'm sleeping. I'm caring about my sleep care about my mental health before like, even though I had all these and I like the word burden, like there were burden, right? Because it might have a negative connotation, but I think it's an appropriate word. So it's like the burdens were there. But they were there. They're separate. I'm not burdened, I am carrying burdens. I'm very language got to two. So I think that it was very again, I appreciate the season of trial. But now I'm in like the season of like the kind of book quote, relax because, again, it's the money comes with your skills, right? So it's like I work I'm at work, but at home I'm studying right, you know, might not be TripleTen. But I'm studying different technologies like AWS, you know, high level Salesforce knowledge couple of different languages just to round out my education because the tech field is so large and gargantuan.

Speaker 1 13:57

So obviously, it's like his office work is a little sedentary. But I mean, that's that's contrary to like your own life where it's like physical like getting hit back knee issues. How does how does your work day look now tech?

Speaker 2 14:12

I'm a salaried worker, W-2, I get insurance benefits. It's typically hybrid. You know, some weeks I'll come in most days, but some weeks, I'll come in two days, zero days, one day, it's up in the air. I come in at around 830 You know, I get an hour lunch I leave at around 435 depending I've upped at 330 It's not always set, right. So sometimes I'll leave a half day like it's there. They're very open. They're very encouraging. If they see you get to the office early, they'll let you go early, you know, so it's, it's a very nice thing biggest previously in my old job. And it's a warehouse gig for a grocery chain. So you go in at the start work at four you leave when They say you can leave. Right? So that's kind of how it is. And without going into like the whole logistics of everything they used to have, basically a workload. So each individual person carries that particular workload. So like, again, I don't want to, you know, focus too much on this, but they had like a minute system. So a 10 hour day was, which is what you get paid for would amount to 600 minutes. So that's where the incentive comes into. If you can pull that 600 minutes faster than the other guy you get to leave before the other guy. Yeah, you see, so. So my brother and I are when we're, they used to call it bangers when we were banging out there, we would pull 161 70% Right. So if I could pull once 150 in six hours what the guy did nine, I leave three hours earlier than the other guy. Oh, wow. But you also get paid hourly, the same. So we made the same amount of money, even though I left three hours earlier.

Speaker 1 16:01

That's awesome. I never heard of that. I actually worked at Amazon for Walmart, Publix. I worked at Amazon one factory in Charlotte. But I wish to have that concept...What like skills and knowledge sets? Did you learn in like your warehouse background that kind of translated into your current job?

Speaker 2 16:25

I technically was part of shipping. So I learned operations really well. I learned how things function flow, because the supply chain, yeah, we have tech we design the software we make implement it make people's lives easier. But without supply chain, we don't have commerce, we don't have economics, we, we don't have cars and everything. So the warehouse is basically the backbone of America, you know, the backbone of many societies, and you don't see it because you have trade and produce and food and everything. The learning supply chain on, I don't want to say a high level, I don't have a degree in it. But learning it on the practical level, you know, I like being in the trenches, so to speak. So being with the people who do it every day, rather than learning it from management in the management has a very broad view and abstract view. But being with the people who do it every day, seeing why they do certain things, and the timing of certain things really kind of opened up my mind to that side of the economy. So seeing the operation flow it helped me with with supply chain operations, and almost business analysis. You go and you see BOGO and ice cream. That's why we know we're pumping out ice cream three weeks in advance heavy. Yeah. Right. So you'd see the flow in a very wide way. And I could appreciate that. It's like, okay, so the reason why we're, we're moving so fast here is because turkeys are about to go out for Thanksgiving, right? So you're kind of you're playing with, I feel like that perspective helps see the bigger picture with things. It's like, okay, yeah, like, I'm coding, you know, I'm coding the website, programming it connecting it to a back end API. But that's going to directly relate to the marketing team, right, they're gonna, they're gonna take advantage of that, and then promote, promote, you know, the blogs or something like that. So that helps what I think what is a detriment is because I was in that like, fast paced environment, I have to rework on patients. I feel like I was a patient guy before. I'm getting there now. But it's like knowing like at your steps count, because when you're when you're getting paid that based on performance you want to perform, but that doesn't encourage safety, that doesn't encourage proper lifting technique, or being aware of your surroundings, stuff like that. So I'm re learning all of that, you know.

18:59

I know you said you were you were creative in the warehouse, kind of stifle that. And that was one of the reasons that you wanted out. How do you feel now like creativity wise.

Speaker 2 19:07

You know, the the proverb, there's more than one way to skin a cat. That's very much the programming and tech field, it's like, you could do the same thing. 20,000 times with 30 different frameworks. But you you're doing it right, so you're making those decisions. On the back end, you could make the Google load screen, anyone could do it. If you know basic CSS and HTML, you can do it. Or you have a guy getting paid like \$300,000 and Google who did this, it looks the same, but you can appreciate the back end until you kind of know what to look for. And I like picking up different like freelance clients because then I get to experiment with things that wouldn't use at work, right? I get to experiment with like a new CSS thing I learned or a new framework or a new JavaScript library and stuff that level of crud tivities is

great when you're writing code, you're basically writing a document. But that's your document, right? Most people's document is not going to look the same as another document. That's why it's so hard to go into someone else's repository, because they're writing something, you know, you could almost say if they started writing a book stopped writing, and then you have to go finish it, that's going to be very difficult there. It's the same thing with code. It's like, why did they make these decisions? Why did the plot go this way? Where does this lead to? Right, but having the creativity to come in from the ground up and build something I think is important, too. Because that's yours. You could say you produced something.

Speaker 1 20:39

I know your brother worked at the warehouse with the you and him started together. Do you think he could do the same thing that you're doing right now? And are you are you talking to him about it?

Speaker 2 20:50

Yeah, I that's a recurring thing. Like we talked about all the time. My brother, he has such a good heart, he gets so like impassioned about something. But then he you know, he also has to work. So he hasn't dedicated himself to the LEAP yet. He went through the first sprint and then and then life caught up to him. And then he had technically is on a freeze.

Speaker 1 21:13

Do you think anyone can be successful in tech?

Speaker 2 21:16

Oh, without any... I do not subscribe to all but he's just this type of person or she, you know, she was born into privilege or, like, ya know, that, that that those are real things like you could have a natural inclination towards towards certain things me, my forte isn't mathematics. It's it's writing, I like to write I like to have an output or communicate. Math, I respect math. I'm not a math guy, right. But if you put me in a calculus class, and I have to take calculus, yeah, I might study three times more than the next guy. But anyone could do it. Right, you just have to, you have to envision what your end goal is, see if your current life circumstances are going to bring you there. And if they're not, consider a field that can bring you there, because that's the thing about software, one, you could go in any direction to, you can work for any type of company, every company uses software. And then three, if you are that type of person, you just make your money, bank it. And then you have that extra time to fulfil your passions.

Speaker 1 22:27

I think one thing I would add on to that too, was you displayed is being honest with yourself. Most people won't tell themselves like, oh, like, I'm bad at math, I started because most people just say I'm bad at math, and they'll just tell the class, you said you will study three times as hard. So it's really being honest with yourself telling yourself, hey, like this, these concepts are harder for me to grasp. So let me take that extra time and dedicate myself to it. Reflecting on your journey over the past few years, I mean, the long days, short nights, five hours, and multiple jobs, injuries and not being able to enjoy your life to the fullest. What was what would be some advice to give someone who's working maybe in a blue collar job that's considering transitioning into tech.

Speaker 2 23:14

If they're already making that consideration, I again, trial by fire, just do it. It's just literally taking the time out of your day, to put yourself into an uncomfortable zone because it will be uncomfortable. You are learning different languages and stuff. Again, I like the ability to work my hands, you know, nail things into the wall. My wife and I would like to buy like a fixer upper home. And then and then have me do most of the things because I like that I like every now and then every now and it's always the golden years when you look back every now and then I go back. I'm like, you know, the warehouse could be fun, but you also would never catch me applying there. Every now and then like oh, yeah, no, that those were good times. And then the next sentiment that proves that fulfills a it's like, well, yeah, but I'm not doing that again. Blue collar work isn't bad. We still need we rely on blue collar work. But at the same time, it's what do you want to do? Like, I know some guys at the warehouse. Their goal was to move to be a truck driver. We need truck drivers, truck drivers make good money, but you're also not home. Right? So you had the that's where the sacrifice and I know truck drivers making like 120 grand but they're not home. Right? So it's like, Do you have a wife? Do you have kids may be working from home isn't a bad idea. Because you know, the kids get to be around daddy all day, you know. So start playing with those ideas. Right? And I think I think the answer should come to you and I think it shouldn't be a self fulfilling answer. It's like, if I'm considering it, there's really no con you might say the initial money but I mean, I know TripleTen has payment plans. You know, I know a woman who basically took out a loan and And did the programme quit her job? And she's out of all the students. I've worked with one of the most brilliant people I've had the privilege of working with. And then even people like I was with and like a period projects. I know a lot of them have received positions, right. Some received positions before graduation. So I don't think it's that hard. It's just jump into it. And what's the worst that could happen?

Speaker 1 25:31

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