From student project to full-time work

Speaker 1 00:05
Hi, my name is Will Newsom. And this is the final episode the first season with TechStart podcast. We've been exploring the realities of changing careers and getting into tech for some time now. And I guess it's time to look back to see where we started, what we've learned, let's start with me. Over the last six months, I partner with a team at TripleTen. To learn about the highs and lows of finding career in tech and 2023. We talked about the gender gap, and how women can find their home in tech, we cover tips for finding that work life balance. And we learned about how the industry has changed over the years, and predictions about what to expect in 2020. For most importantly, we talked about how anyone can get into tech. In fact, at the heart of the tech industry or the people, people will find their way into tech, all different careers. It's only fitting that we end the season with one more story. It's a short story of a man looking for his place in modern it, but it's still a tendency typical and a reassuring one. Meet John Dickson.

Speaker 2 01:15
I travelled the world. I've been living as a digital nomad since about 2018. And I've been working overseas since about 2016. So I've definitely been very nomadic for a long time, about seven years now.

Speaker 1 01:34
Tell us a little bit about John Dickson before TripleTen, what brought you to tech?

Speaker 2 01:37
So the first time I went overseas, was interior 16. That's when I started teaching English. So I have actually a master's in applied linguistics. And I decided, you know, I was struggling with opportunities for work in Australia. And so I went overseas, and I started teaching English, then, from there, you know, I discovered, you know, teaching English online, and I was able to then travel a bit more while teaching online. But one of the problems that I faced with that was that the salaries kind of went down, as more and more people discovered this kind of online teaching, you know, when I first started, I was making $20 an hour. And then by the time I left the industry, you know, most wouldn't pay more than about $10 an hour that was kind of pushed me I had to make a change. And so that's when I started looking around. And that was actually during COVID as well, to make things worse. That's when I was looking around. And you know, I just got the TripleTen.

Speaker 1 02:41
So did you have a plan coming in? I mean, were you just generally interested in braking into tech? Or was it something specific?

Speaker 2 02:47
Yeah, I decided that, you know, I needed a career change. So my plan was to get into the tech and AI space. Actually, the thing that piqued my interest in particularly data science was seeing a lot of data

coming about COVID. And, you know, all of these predictions that are happening COVID will do this COVID will do that. And then a lot of the time these things didn't happen. And I was like, why are we not using more data driven approaches more machine learning driven approaches? Because you know, machine learning is a huge thing, even at the start of the COVID? Why are we not using that to, you know, make better predictions? So that's kind of something that got me interested in particularly dub ScienceBase

Speaker 1 03:31
What do you signed up for TripleTen? How long do you think is actually going to take you to land a job?

Speaker 2 03:35
Didn't really have any idea how long you know, of course, I knew after I finished the course that I'd have a couple of months at least to land the job. One of the big challenges for me are being I work in a different I'm don't have working rights in the USA. So it becomes more challenging because there's less lot less opportunities for this in Australia. So I still had to be trying to look for opportunities with US based companies that are willing to employ foreigners either through, you know, having their localised offices or other means to employ a foreigner to that that was quite a challenge that setting the limited the number of options, you know, there had to be basically multinational companies that could either you know, get me a visa, or employ me out of an Australian or New Zealand office.

Speaker 1 04:29
You touched upon this topic earlier. But could you specify why you chose data science bootcamp, specifically? I mean, you could have chosen to become a data analyst if you love big data so much.

Speaker 2 04:37
I think thinking about the machine learning and the power of that and how we can harness that to make better modelling and predictions in the future. You know, when something happens, why can't we use this machine learning to to do a better job of the predictions? And I think even Now when I look at, look at the data and go back in the past, there are a few challenges that I think came with, it would come with a machine learning track that probably would make the results inaccurate, even if I was to go back and train on a set of data at the time I made that decision, you know, that machine learning algorithm would have not taken into account certain factors. So, I think there's can be an over reliance on machine learning as well. So, you know, I learned a lot in the course about, you know, limitations as well.

Speaker 1 05:40
How does your time in bootcamp compared to your other learning experiences like college university, YouTube, Udemy?

Speaker 2 05:46
Well, I actually did a year of university. I did it in university for one year before I switched to business. So I can certainly compare kind of against that. And a lot of, I think the big difference was hands on code, compared to if you go to university. Yes, you're coding. But you know, they're teaching you these broad concepts if theory in and then you spend a couple of weeks learning a bunch of theory, and then

you get to code this, this app, or this little project, where TripleTen is very much hands on from the start. And you take step by step the small steps to to build things up. So it's more rooted in practical uses practical application, whereas University is more theoretical use, spend a lot of time learning theory and a little bit of time coding.

Speaker 1 06:44
Tell us about your externship experience, what did it teach you that a bootcamp can't?

Speaker 2 06:48
Well, an externship is kind of, if you're familiar with an internship, it's kind of like that, but for, you know, we're doing it through Kutesa, or an external company, and we were doing it remotely. So we weren't really going into the company and working, they were just giving us an external project. This is what a challenge that we need to solve. And we want you to help us with that. And at the time there Kutesa was the do externships, you know, kind of sort of regularly, but at the time I graduated Kutesa was the one that was open. So that's the one that I worked on. And I was intrigued by the challenge of, of that particular project, and I had so much to learn going into that as well, far more than you know, was taught by TripleTen. Because there's a lot more depth about industry that you kind of don't necessarily learn in TripleTen, not related to the machine learning, but about each individual industry, if you're doing machine learning in business, you know, TripleTen doesn't teach you business. If you're doing you know, machine learning for another for a medical field, they don't teach you medicine. So you have to kind of build the domain knowledge alongside that machine learning knowledge as well.

Speaker 1 08:09
What does Cuetessa do?

Speaker 2 08:10
They're building a music app at the moment, so that people can listen to music is this changing the way that we listen to music, it's more like, at the moment, it's gonna be more like a music streaming thing where we're creating more tailored playlists. And we're doing some things more specifically around that. So there's some challenges that we're facing. And this is particularly where machine learning comes in, of trying to make sure everything matches up. There's a lot of stuff that has been at the start done by hand to try and make sure this goes with this. And this sounds good with this. And then we got to build in machine learning. So that doesn't all have to be done by hand forever. The particular project that we're working on was doing predicting music features. So in that in this case, it was music valence. So it's the energy of the mood of the music, and trying to match, you know, there's scale. Typically, if you look at something like Spotify, there'll be a valence scale of, you know, one to 10 or whatever, you know, low energy, high energy kind of thing, and a low mood, you know, depressing kind of songs and you have a high energy and songs that want to make you dance kind of thing. And so, we were trying to create a model that would fairly accurately predict that kind of thing, because that's just one part of putting two songs together that sound having two songs together that sound like they're, they belong together. That's a part of it.

Speaker 1 09:50
Do the externship make you feel like you're ready for an actual job.

Speaker 2 09:52
I was ready for a job. So I think I was definitely prepared or a normal job where have somebody to ask questions because I was able to build a lot of stuff. But sometimes it just lacked that. I don't understand why we did this. Why do we do that? And not having somebody to ask. So I had to build a lot of knowledge, domain knowledge. And even, you know, the machine learning knowledge, I had to dig really deep into understanding why things are done a certain way. Bigger is not a better. That's one of the first things that I discovered, because I'm learning I'm working in particularly the deep learning the neural networks kind of thing. Creating a bigger neural network doesn't necessarily make your model more accurate, but might make it overfit more. You know, we were taught that, but getting to actually put that into test and keep making that mistake and then realising Well, actually, yeah, you know, just because you make the model bigger, deeper network, more neurons doesn't make it more accurate. When I was doing the externship, I think it was over the course of a month. And I was putting in 20 or 30 hours a week just to develop the highest quality models. So I think that there is something about putting in extra time to dig a bit deeper, that really helped with getting the results that I got there. But the structure knowing where to start or what to build in certain areas. Definitely that was all, you know, the skeleton of it was all taught in TripleTen. And then just filling that out with specific needs is what I had to learn. And I was doing the externship immediately

Speaker 1 11:45
Clicked with you and Cuetessa, how and when did you realise that you had a chance of getting an actual job?

Speaker 2 11:50
It's kind of set myself the goal. You know, partway through the externship. I'm like, Oh, this is fun, I'm enjoying. I'm enjoying this, you know, if they're going to employ somebody, I'm going to do my best to make sure it's me. As I really put in the time to make sure things went well. So I think that's why I spent so much time doing it, trying to refine the processes, build everything so that when it came to end, you know, there was no nobody saying, oh, there's a job at the end of this. But I was thinking that whole time. Like if there's a job at the end of this, I want that person to the me. During the final presentation, at some point he he said something about reaching out for employment. And I'm like, Yep, that's me. That's the time where I was like, yes. Okay, there's definitely a good chance here that I will get a job. So I've been working since I think March this year. And my role on paper, software engineer, machine learning engineer.

Speaker 1 13:01
So, the externship really played out well for John. I guess my journey was even simpler. Actually, when I started at TripleTen, I was already working in a sales position and big tech. I was definitely looking for data science jobs, we got a new job with even better benefits during a terrible job market. Someone said, however, TripleTen has given me knowledge that I can use in a future career because I want to exit sales. access to material is lifelong. It's also given me a professional network to lean on, and forever learn from with countless examples of people that have accelerated their careers. I team before TripleTen seemed like a pipe dream. After it and these episodes, it seems like a tangible reality. For all the warehouse workers, designers and fashionistas who are thinking about career in tech, we're here to

tell you Yes, yes, you can make the switch. And you don't have to do it alone. There's a whole community behind you that made that transition. And their stories are here to serve as inspiration that you can do it to take it from me, a bootcamp graduate, signed up a TripleTen exposes me to so much more than what I could have found online. And whether you're pivoting to a totally new career, which is looking to expand your skill set, signing up, or TripleTen bootcamp is your first step to new tomorrow. Your story is just beginning. We can't wait to see what's in your next chapter. If you learn one thing from this podcast, I hope that you can work in it no matter what your background was, or how you look. It's all about what you want and how much work you're willing to put in. Don't worry, she will take it help you when you're ready to commit. This was a tech startup podcast brought to you by libre libre studio in partnership with TripleTen A for more career tips by visiting tripleten.com/blog. Until next time.