

What Is It Like to Be a Software Engineer_

Speaker 1 00:05

Hi, my name is Will Newsome, and you're listening to tech start. In this show, we explore the realities of changing careers and getting into tech. In previous episodes, we talked about what a new career taking bring your life, how to apply your past work experience, and tips to find a job that allows you to keep a good work life balance. We've heard from career coaches and bootcamp students on what the journey was like to break into tech. But what is waiting for you when you actually get that job? What does a day in the life of a tech worker actually look like? To find out? I spoke with Julian Hernandez TripleTen tutor and a full stack software engineer who's been working in tech for almost a decade.

Speaker 2 00:50

So my name is Julian Hernandez. I'm from Philadelphia, PA City of Brotherly Love born and raised, like little Smith, and I'm a self taught full stack developer. When did you start your journey in tech I got interested in when I was in high school, I wanted to be an app developer. So I started learning Java, I started learning that online, but after learning it, I fell in love with the coding part of it, then some website opportunity, you know, just some friends that had some small businesses that were like, Hey, we know you're into that stuff. Could you could you throw together a website? So I started learning, web development. after that. I just started with, you know, just JavaScript terrible HTML sites that I made very limited CSS. But yeah, that was pretty much how I started into that. Yeah, I mean, that's pretty much my journey from the beginning. I know you said that. You wanted to be an app developer, what drew your interests into the tech industry itself? Because you were because you you got interested really early while you're still in high school. When I was in high school, I went to a tech school. So they were really big on the tech, we learned HTML, you know, very limited HTML. I remember seventh grade computer class. Everyone was just mega confused. And I don't think anyone's even realised we were developing websites. I was just HTML, no CSS, but later on a freshman year of high school, my effect my class was the pilot for this programme. They deal with all iPads. So every student in the class had iPads, every single freshman. So you can imagine that, you know, it was supposed to boost productivity, but we ended up all just playing games all the time. So this is a new game every week. But one thing that I don't know if you remember this game years ago, was called Flappy Bird. Yeah, I love the game played it all the time. But it was just an indie developer. It was a guy named Don Goodwin. And this guy reportedly was making about 50k a day just based off the ad revenue. I think he just lived with his mom, he just in his room, he just created this game. And it just went viral. And I'm like, Wow, that sounds like my situation. If I can just go in my room code for a few hours and just create a game that goes viral. I mean, that's phenomenal. So that's what got me into app development specifically.

Speaker 1 02:59

What do you think the differences are pros and cons versus self taught thean bootcamp?

Speaker 2 03:05

There's so many different definitions of what is self taught, I always say self taught if you didn't have like a community. And I think that's one of the most valuable things of when you do a boot camp is a community around you. But my biggest struggle in the beginning was not just learning it, but also knowing what to learn. I mean, there's so many things out there. I mean, first search app development. I wish I had, you know, I wish someone told me sooner like I mean, you think about apps today. I mean, there's more demand for web than there is for anything. I wish I had someone telling me that sooner than have to find that out for myself. And then there's so many different stacks. There's the myrn stack, there's a mean stack, there is no plate P, PHP, Python, Django, and which one do you get into? Just having to figure that out for myself was one of the most frustrating things as well. Was there enough information available to you? How did you sift through like the garbage? And then what was really valuable? And did you like struggle? Or was it kind of easy to because you might I mean, you said you had an interest in computers in a ways when you were younger? Yeah, I mean, I definitely struggled as to what resources to use, there was still a good amount, not nearly as many as today. But there was Free Code Camp was a big one back then. And then there was just endless, you know, people create YouTube playlists, like oh, you know, just take just work to this playlist, and you'll be a full stack developer by the end of it. I learned a little bit from many different places. So when I started something a little bit more formal, like Udemy I just get bored so quickly in the beginning, because I had kind of learned the basics already. Yeah, so it kind of took a while for me to get to the point where like, okay, like, here's, here's where I have my knowledge gap. Here's what I'm learning things. So a lot of it too is just self discipline of just sticking through those points and getting through it but Udemy was probably my biggest resource.

Speaker 1 04:46

Definitely. I can definitely agree with you on the Udemy I probably started 20 courses and finish two. What were like the techniques and or how did you I guess perfect your craft when yo we're still like in the learning stages of development like your code habits?

Speaker 2 05:04

The thing that benefited me the most was watching other people quote, because of course, you can watch tutorials and you know, you watch someone else code, but just, there's so many live streams online of people who just hey, like, I'm gonna do this small project today, just watch me work through it. Because when you keep watching the tutorials and get stuck in that what they call tutorial purgatory, you're seeing someone who has that entire thing scripted. So you're seeing someone work through it so fast, they'll make small mistakes, but they're not, you know, architectural mistakes, they have the whole project built out, so you don't kind of see that mind running, and you don't see them. Okay, so here's, you know, plan A, plan B, plan C, and then let me work through those steps. They already have it all worked out. So when you watch someone live code, you see them go through that thought process. If they're if it's a good tutorial, they'll talk you through it, you Okay, so here's the problem I'm solving. Here's a few ways I can do it. And ultimately, here's one I'm going to go with you see that thought process legit helped me mould my, I guess, my developer mind, you know, just this architecturally building out, you know, these different systems, whether it be you know, a huge system, or just a small page website, working through some CSS problems. So you know, just seeing that another person working that mindset and how they think about it, how they solve certain problems. That helped me so much.

Speaker 1 06:22

Do you think it's easier or harder to become like a self taught programmer? Nowadays, there's obviously way more resources and we're like, more embedded, and you can tell because like reviews, comments, all that kind of stuff. But then there's like a lot of complex text acts as well now.

Speaker 2 06:37

Of course, I'm a little biased. So if anyone asked me, I still you know, I told them to do a boot camp. You know, of course, I'm a little biased being a TripleTen. But I think that that's the best way still, if I had someone to guide me, I probably would have done it in probably less than half the time than I would have, I probably would have been a better developer today. But you know, if someone does want to go the super self taught route, you know, with the Udemy courses, and just walk me through where you don't have deadlines. You don't have a community. I mean, it's definitely still possible for anybody. But there's just so much self discipline involved in it. Because so much more I always suggest a bootcamp over anything. You mentioned a really interesting term earlier, developers purgatory, could you give us maybe some ways that if somebody is stuck in that purgatory, how to get out of it, I remember one day I went to Starbucks, I was still in the beginning, I had a freelance client, and I was in Starbucks, you know, just coding away and on a small little site, and I saw a guy next to me, and he was on an iPad, watching tutorials, coding tutorials. And I remember he saw me and he looked at me, and he was like, Oh, well, you know, like, that's another guy. You know, he's into code. And I remember just watching him, and he's on an iPad. And he's just there, just watching it just just blindly just watching it not not following along, just just watching it. And I remember thinking to myself, Man, like I remember those days, where I would sit down and just watch a tutorial and not take any action, I wouldn't follow along, I would just sit there and watch it. And I think that just because I'm watching it, some by osmosis, I'm just soaking it up. So just don't if you're in that Washingtonians Watch, watch as many as you can. But take action on it, follow along, you know, code alongside it, you know, don't just watch it. And finally, work on things that you find interesting. So you have a small app idea, it could be the dumbest idea in the world, it can be completely useless. Just build it. Because when you do that, again, you're going to develop those thinking skills of working out those problems yourself. Again, they're not going to be scripted. They're not going to be architected for you, you can learn the syntax of language all you want. But if you're not developing those skills to actually build something, you know, yourself, then you're going to be stuck in that tutorial purgatory where you always need direction for every single line of code. You're not thinking for yourself.

Speaker 1 08:55

Okay? What do you do now, Julian? What do you currently do?

Speaker 2 09:04

Yeah. So I tell everyone, I'm a full stack developer, I was saying what Jack of all trades master at absolutely none. So right now, I actually since the beginning, I had always gotten involved with WordPress, and PHP, which people always kind of snicker at that because it's like a it's like a dying language. And it is, you know, I think I don't know the stats on it. But I think WordPress is like the only thing keeping PHP alive. Now one reason I never tell anyone I'm a WordPress developer is because that means a lot of different things nowadays, because you can get into WordPress and then just work

with something called like WP bakery, or Elementor, where you're just dragging and dropping things. That's not what I do. I do the completely custom stuff. So I work a lot with WordPress, a lot of the company I work with now I work with an agency. So that's why I tell everyone I'm a lot of different a little different, a little unconventional, because most developers they work for the company that you don't just housing in house product or in house software, I work with an agency that builds software for other clients. So it's a little different. But that's pretty much what I do now. And it's I was trying to get away from WordPress, but every time I do it, it keeps coming back. And, you know, at this point, I wouldn't say I'm a master at it, but it's probably what I know best. So I guess it looks like I'm sticking with it for now.

10:23

Okay,

Speaker 1 10:23

Okay, actually, a lot of people are trying to move into tech right now, what kind of life is a person signing up for one day when they choose to work in the tech industry?

Speaker 2 10:33

It definitely depends on where you go, you know, if you're working for a bigger company, you might find yourself in the land of ping pong tables and full tables. And, you know, those weird chairs that they got, you know, if you're working for a company like Facebook, or Amazon or Apple, and then that's one life, the corporate lifestyle, or you can go for a startup where, you know, hopefully, a lot of times you're making more than the C suite because you're actually getting a salary. Whereas those guys are, you know, just getting dividends and stock. But it really just depends on where you go, like, you know, for startup, they kind of a lot of them expecting kind of give your life to the startup because they're trying to work this big ball up a hill, the stone up a hill, and sometimes it doesn't work out or like me, my goal was to have a really flexible schedule, which is one of the reasons I love working for smaller companies. So I do a lot of outside volunteer work I do about I'm also a volunteer Bible teacher. So I do about 600 a year, which comes out to about 50 a month, 50 hours a month, oh, man. So I have to work a lot of my time around that. I love finding flexible positions. And that's one of the reasons I love the position I'm at now is my boss is awesome, even last minute stuff, he's fine with, you know, working around it, just as long as I get things in on time, you know, the time that I do the work isn't so important. And that's a beautiful thing about working in a small company, too. We don't have I love agile, and you know, all those types of working flows. But you know, the morning stand ups where you talking about things you did yesterday, and everybody else acts like daycare, and I'm not a big fan of that. So we don't do that as small companies, we just get the work you do it, you have questions? No, it's done break. So we just we do the work. And that's, that's all they care about. So it really just depends on on where you land, but pretty much every workflow that you like, you know, there's something available in tech, and you just gotta find the right company.

Speaker 1 12:30

Okay. Have you ever worked at elegant big corporation before?

Speaker 2 12:34

I haven't, mainly because they never offer the flexible schedules that I'm looking for. So I had Amazon reached out a little while ago, when I told them about what I'm looking for. They're like, ooh, we can do a little something, but not nearly as flexible as they are here. Another company that reached out, he ended up getting an offer from them, they were offered some flexibility, but just not at the same level. And the pay was higher than I have now. But I didn't end up taking that either. Like I said, the work life balance is what's most important to me. So you know, is it the is it the money you want? Or the work life balance? I chose a work life balance.

Speaker 1 13:11

Why did you decide to become a tutor at TripleTen?

Speaker 2 13:13

I mean, we're always learning. So you know, I'm still in that phase. But I think back to my journey of, you know, finding my first job and actually getting comfortable, you know, telling people, I'm a developer and actually believing in myself. So I think back to it, it was just so messy for me, and I did not have anyone to guide me, I didn't have anyone that was even interested in coding, I just did not know anyone, I could have done better on networking. And you know, I live in Philly, and there's a few, you know, conventions and things that they do and beat up. So I could have done better at doing that. But I just I did not even know anybody that was interested in it, that did it for a living that was interested in even learning it. So just having nobody to talk to about it. And other than, you know, online forums and Stack Overflow, I really wish I had that just to keep going like I was fascinated when I would meet someone and so being at TripleTen. And you know, being one of those tutors and being able to help other students who are interested in it, who have the passion, it also helped me you know, revive that passion as well. You know, I get to see other people who are beginning and are so you know, so interested in and they just spend all of their time and then by the end of the programme, they're telling me things they learned, you know, like, Hey, man, you know, I haven't even I haven't even looked into that yet. And they're asking me about it. And so you know, helped me revive that passion and just why I got into it as well. But you know, being that person that helps guide someone toward something I love so much. I mean, that's, that's awesome.

14:42

Are

Speaker 1 14:42

Are there common struggles between the students even at TripleTen in a boot camp, like like a certain theme that runs among like students that like maybe new to tech?

Speaker 2 14:51

Yeah, in the beginning, a lot of times you can see when a student hasn't wrap their mind around everything that's going on like how HTML, CSS and JavaScript fit together. And the fact that they're writing code that comes from the server and goes to their client on the browser. So in the beginning, I try to in the beginning sprints, I try to make sure that every student has their head wrapped around that. So in the beginning, I think that's a common struggle, they just know, I'm going to learn to code. And they get into TripleTen, and software engineering, and they don't understand the difference between

this and and app development, this the different fields. So a lot of times, you know, some people may just sign up and like, Okay, this is something I'm going to learn and, you know, they haven't done the other research around it and just wrap their head around exactly what it is they're learning and how this actually benefits people are, actually find them a job. So I think that's a common struggle.

Speaker 1 15:47

Okay. Are there any study tips that like, you seem to be proven to like, be effective within like the student population? Yeah,

Speaker 2 15:54

Yeah, one thing I always say not to do is don't take notes. And I don't mean, don't take any notes. I mean, don't take notes as if there's going to be a test because there's no tests. So if I had another body that signed up and a few other students, and they're like, you know, they show me this huge notebook, and they're like, yeah, look at all the notes I'm taking. And I'm like, that's a waste of time, because you're never going to look at it. Because if you actually need to go back in those notes, Google search, or Stack Overflow, or even nowadays, chat, GPT, you know, that a lot faster than, you know, going back in those notes. So, you know, hey, look at that work for you fine, but in most cases, and everyone I talked to, they come back, and they're like, you're right, I never looked at the notebook, I throw it away, I stopped wasting time, you know, spending a half an hour on one page of the theory. And, you know, just because I wanted to take all the notes, I can, you know, just retain it, you learn when you code. So, you know, just hands on doing is when you learn, and that's why that tutorial, Purgatory is so difficult, because you think you're learning when you watch someone else do it. But it's not until you get in there and you have the problems that you learn. So you know, just learn theory and watch tutorials, but at the end of the day, do get into a code editor, you may not know anything, you don't know what you're doing, just start and you'll, you'll figure it out from there.

Speaker 1 17:14

You've been in tech for a pretty significant amount of time now, have you seen like a change in like the crowd that's trying to break into tech from when you when you first started?

Speaker 2 17:23

I don't know if I can say for sure. Because I you know, once once you once I started as a tutor here, that's when I really got to see who's you know, who's trying to break into tech. And that's when I landed, and I don't know, if I'm in an echo chamber of boot camps, or really has blown up in the last year? I think it has. But yeah, I was surprised to see the age ranges on there's a lot of older ones, you know, like over 50, who have retired and they're just looking for something to do or even to break into tech completely and find a job, which I think is awesome, because I've worked with a lot of them that have really picked it up really quick. And you know, the older ones as well. And I don't know the status. So I can't say for sure. But there's a lot of women and we also have Women Who Code. I know that someone that we work with, for like, there's a lot of women and I know that there's that stigma of of, you know, women in STEM, and you know that they're not encouraged to be in it. I mean, I can tell you there are I mean, they're here and they're active, and they're really good, if not the best students we have. So yeah, there's I was surprised to see how interested and how interested they are. And of course they're phenomenal.

Speaker 1 18:29

Have you noticed people have like different generations learning differently, like the wiser, generation, learning differently, or absorbing the material differently than like, the younger generations?

Speaker 2 18:39

Yeah, that's, it's an interesting question. When I think back to working with them, I would say that they like more hands on guidance. So they love to have a tutor, you know, to talk to the younger generation colleges, teach the videos and I don't know if it's just, you know, the internet that's done this, but they rather you know, why videos or read something, and then learn it themselves then that, you know, talk to somebody in real life. But the older ones, they love to conversate too, and they're always on our office hours and they love to talk about our journey and what got us into it. And they love the formal the formality of it, which I'm a big fan of too. So you know, they're they're always one of the most professional as well, you know, and they Yeah, they love that hands on trading and working with a tutor.

Speaker 1 19:30

There's like a term like a like a process learning curve, like people when they first started to boot camps are super excited learning a new skill, going to a new career, and then after a time, it gets difficult and they lose a lot of enthusiasm. Like have you have you noticed that being a tutor at TripleTen? 100% 100%

Speaker 2 19:47

100% that happens so often. I know we have a graph. I'm not familiar with it. I forget what it's called. I know it's a theory, but it's no there's one part of it where you peek at it. There's a valley of despair, I think we're, you know, you're so motivated. And then you you see, like, wow, like, I've learned so much so far, but there's still so much that I don't know. And at the same time, too, you know, life gets in the way, sometimes things happen. And you may even, you know, you may even go through something tragic or you may get sick. And you may just have to give attention to other things instead of, you know, learning a new skill. So I've definitely have seen that. But I think the most detrimental is when you just lose interest, because that's harder to get get back then than anything else. So what I always tell people, and especially friends that want to learn, they're like, Hey, how'd you get into it, I said, the best thing you have to do is fall in love with it. So if you do it for a month or two, and you don't fall in love with it, everyone's like, Yeah, but I know there's good money in tax, I'm gonna stick with it. I'm like, don't, don't waste your time. Just Just go with something else. Because if you don't fall in love with it, you're not going to stick with it. You got to love what you do. So I even tell students that, I don't know if they like that. I tell students, I tell them, if you don't fall in love with it. Don't waste your time learning.

Speaker 1 21:08

What's something that you wish you knew before starting in IT, like some insight to the industry like, say I'm just wanting to go into? Or maybe I just finished a bootcamp, what should I expect, like my first job, and let's say, let's say we go to the agency, because you're obviously working.

Speaker 2 21:24

People skills are really important in this industry, I was talking to another person that they were trying to break into tech, and he said, because they're introverted, they just don't really want to deal with anybody. And that's true that you know, a lot of jobs, you don't deal with as many people as you do. And other fields, that's very true. But you still do have to deal with people. Even if you're a solo entrepreneur or a freelancer, you still have to deal with clients. And so you're dealing with a lot of people because you're dealing with, you know, business to business, you got to be super professional, your people skills have to be great. And if you're in a company, then you know, communication is super important. It may just be through text even I mean, there are some times where maybe I'll go a month without even hearing my boss's voice. And you know, we'll just we'll talk through slack, and weeks at a time, but even that textual etiquette to you still got to have people skills. So it's sure if you're you don't want to deal with people, it's a great industry to go into. But because you do it a lot less, but you still got to do it. And so having good people skills, good communication skills is still super important.

Speaker 1 22:27

What do you think the best way is the best path and it like, is it like an online course like YouTube University, then the bootcamp.

Speaker 2 22:35

As I said, I always suggest a bootcamp because it provides the structure of a lot of like Udemy courses, YouTube courses, I'll tell you, hey, look, you just watch this course. And at the end of it, you have projects and you're ready to get out into the field. I think that's a little exaggerated, I don't think is necessarily realistic, but with TripleTen I think it is very realistic. You see it, it happens even before students graduate, you know, even by Sprint 10-11. You know, students are getting jobs, if I remember correctly, but no, before they graduate, and a lot of them they've already find jobs, and they just go from there. But I always suggest a boot camp because of that structure. And it is is a very realistic claim that by the end of the boot camp, you're you're valuable in the job market.

Speaker 1 23:21

This was my conversation with Julian Hernandez. Now that you better know what a software developers actual day to day work could look like. Maybe you can picture your own path a little more clearly. Explore more career tips by visiting tripleten.com/blog.

23:38

This was a tech star podcast brought to you by libo/libo studio and partnership with TripleTen. In the next episode, we're going to explore another aspect of why tech attracts newcomers the opportunity to work remotely or switch locations within the states. Stay tuned.