Life Beyond The Classroom: Insights From The Working World

Georgia State University Student Chapter of the ACM
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Christopher Freas (cfreas@cs.gsu.edu)
Overview

- The dreaded interview
- What does a typical work day look like?
- How NOT to work for somebody
- Teams, teams, teams
- The performance review
- Honing your skills to stand out
The Dreaded Interview

- I’ve encountered about a half dozen interview techniques so far: phone screens, face-to-face, coding interviews, group interviews, video chat (think Google Hangouts), and the worst of all, the STAR interview.

- They all aim to answer two important questions:
  - Can you do the job?
  - Can you fit in at the company?
The Dreaded Interview

- The STAR interview response technique:
  - Situation
  - Task
  - Action
  - Result
So, where should you work? A big company or a small company or startup?

Depends on how much risk you’re willing to accept and how quickly you want to move up in your career.

Regardless of your choice, interviews are mostly the same so so interview skills transfer.
A Typical Work Day

- I lied a bit… there is no typical work day!
- My day may consist of meetings, documentation, writing code, configuring routers, running tests, helping other teams, working with a vendor, and so on!
- The key takeaway: be prepared to wear many hats!
A Typical Work Day

- We have a 40,000 square foot lab in Dunwoody
- Nearly every imaginable network device there
- HUGE SDN and virtualization playground: OpenStack, Contrail, PCEP, VMWare, and several hundred petabytes of storage for use
How NOT To Work For Somebody

The Top 10 things you can do to drastically shorten your employment:

- Don’t ask questions
- Don’t participate in meetings
- Don’t participate in group discussions/whiteboard sessions
- Don’t follow up
- Don’t ask for (or provide) help
How NOT To Work For Somebody

The Top 10 things you can do to drastically shorten your employment (cont’d):

- Don’t jump at opportunities to expand your skills
- Don’t take initiative
- Don’t get along with anybody
- Don’t speak well of the company
- Don’t deliver
Teams, teams, teams

- If you like working alone, you probably won’t last very long in a corporate environment (whether at a startup or a Fortune 50 company)

- Different than working on a team project at GSU:
  - You may have to engage other teams
  - You may work with remote people (and never actually meet them face to face)
  - You might work with (for?) a project manager
  - Project may span weeks, months, or years
The Performance Review

- Otherwise known as, “justify why we should keep you employed…” (I’m kidding)
- A one-on-one review with your manager to go over your goals for the year and see to what extent you met them
- Your chance to sell yourself again and get a good pay raise!
- Often the overall performance of the company factors into your pay increase
Honoring Your Skills to Stand Out

The situation:

- You’re all pursuing (or already have) a CS degree
- Employers look for compelling reasons to offer a job to an applicant
- What do you do??
The solution: develop new (and maybe odd) skills!

What I did:

- Started out in the networking field, acquired a good understanding of networking principles (routing, switching, VPNs, MPLS, yadda-yadda)
- Not good enough! Studied for and passed 5 Cisco certifications (CCNA, CCDA, CCNP, CCDP, CCIP)
- Not good enough! Learned the intimate details of Linux, compiled a working system from scratch
Honing Your Skills to Stand Out

What I did (cont’d):

- Not good enough! Learned how to program in in-demand languages: C/C++, Perl, Python, Javascript, etc…
- Not good enough! Contribute to Open Source projects
- Not good enough! Time for an advanced degree!

The key takeaway: I exhibit an insatiable desire to learn new things and apply that knowledge to my work. Employers eat that up!
Questions?
Thank you for your time!