

# From The Classroom To The Conference Room – My Journey From Being a Student to a Mainframe Professional

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## I Didn't Start as an Expert

- Studied Computer Science at Northern Illinois University
  - Zero mainframe knowledge at the start
- Learned 370 Assembler and COBOL



What I used to learn assembler!!

- Realized this is the world I want to be in

## I Didn't Start as an Expert

- How'd I get here?
  - Went to conferences
    - Handed out resumes
    - Spoke to industry professionals and hiring managers
  - Then got hired on as an intern at SVA Software, Inc.
  - After graduation I was promoted to a Mainframe Technical Consultant

## What Felt Intimidating Starting Out

- Only experience starting my internship was Assembler and COBOL
  - Surface level knowledge of what the mainframe does
- No idea what the mainframe acronyms meant
  - CICS?
  - WLM?
  - DB2?
  - What do these all mean??
- Didn't think the mainframe had to be maintained
  - Fires up like an iPhone, right?

## From Theory to Reality

- The lack of experience and knowledge kept me curious
  - Learning from mentors
    - Given tasks to research parts of the mainframe
    - Given work that had value
      - Not about the mainframe, but company systems

## From Theory to Reality

- Eventually being able to sit in Performance Reviews
  - Seeing the impacts that changes are made
  - Being able to see where things have gone wrong
    - How those issues can be fixed
  - Asking questions on specific instances I saw
- When I gained more knowledge
  - Asked questions about my thoughts on a topic/area
  - Building relationships with clients as an intern
- Monitoring client Mainframes
  - Applying what I've learned
  - Asking the right questions to mentors
- Then leading discussions with the areas that I want to master

## The Skills That Actually Mattered

- What mattered more than experience?
  - Curiosity
    - Willingness to learn
    - Trying things on my own first
    - Asking the right questions at the right time
  - Confidence
    - No expectation for me to know things off the bat
    - Lack of knowledge ≠ lack of intelligence

## For the Students

- Put yourself out there
  - Meet people, talk to them
    - Not only with potential employers
    - Don't be afraid
- Say yes to opportunities
  - Don't self select out
    - No knowledge ≠ don't belong
    - There should be no expectation of deep knowledge at a starting level
- Don't be afraid to ask questions
  - Curiosity is the best skill you can have
  - Being able to recognize when help is needed

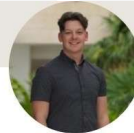
## For The Professionals & Hiring Managers

- Students bring:
  - Adaptability
    - They can be molded
    - Take on roles that will eventually need to be filled
  - Long-term value
    - Talent development
      - Base knowledge of business needs
      - Expectations are recognized
    - Cost value
      - Saving time

## For The Professionals & Hiring Managers

- The industry needs:
  - Investment
    - Starting when they are in school
    - Seeing if they are a right fit as a person
  - Mentorship
    - Passing down knowledge to eventually fill that role
  - Follow through
    - Giving work that has value

Connect with me!



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