

A career in computers

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The short story

MISTAKES

It could be that the purpose of your life is only to serve
as a warning to others.

--despair.com

The short story

- Graduated from UW in 1983
- Tektronix, Inc. (1983-1989)
- Test Systems Strategies, Inc. (1991-1992)
- Sequent Computers Systems, Inc. (1989-1990, 1992-1999)
- IBM[®]-- since IBM bought Sequent Computers Systems, Inc. in 1999

The current story

Software engineer working with UNIX[®] , Linux, or similar for 35 years

Member of LTC (Linux Technology Center) since IBM bought Sequent Computer Systems, Inc. in 1999

Linux specialties: Linux kernel in general, OOM killer, virtual memory, process scheduler, virtual network interface driver



The start of the story: UW-Madison

- Did not declare major until junior year
- Learned about working in teams
- Learned about working with “non-people” people
- Learned about financial aid
- Learned about the cost of heavy class loads

In “the real world”

- Promoted four times in the first six years
- Promoted once in the next thirty
- Variety is the spice of life – be a writer! or a lawyer! or a doctor! or a webmaster!
- Selling yourself: TSSI
- Knowing when to get out: Atlas Telecom
- Knowing when/how to say “I don't know”
- Spreading the word: getting out and connecting



Friendly advice

WORK

Work is anything a body is obliged to do.

--Mark Twain

Friendly advice

- Know what you know, but develop some breadth
- Be flexible; but know what is not negotiable to you
- Take advantage of being new
- Never quit learning
- Make sure there are plenty of witnesses
- Don't find work; find a good job
- Give back: tutoring, teaching, mentoring



Friendly advice – from more recent grads

Have you started your job/internship search? This is something I've learned needs to happen in the fall, really.



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Exploit any and all connections you might have when job searching. Even if you've never met them, you'll have a lot more luck talking with someone before submitting applications online.

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Finally, not having homework is pretty awesome. Don't get too used to it ...

Friendly advice – from more recent grads

Don't be afraid to take advantage of your newfound freedom

- Many employers let you pick your start date and they probably can scrounge up a few months for the equivalent of the old "backpack around Europe" cliché

Friendly advice – from more recent grads

Before you graduate, make a list of the professors you've worked closely with

- get their contact info
- get permission to use them as a reference
- get any letters of recommendation you might need in the future (in case you want to apply to grad school later)

Covid advice

So much has changed – like I need to tell **you**

- Work from home vs office/cubicle/table spot
- “Social engineering” has changed
- Social interaction has changed
- Mask, or no?
- Handshake, or no?
- Teambuilding

Questions

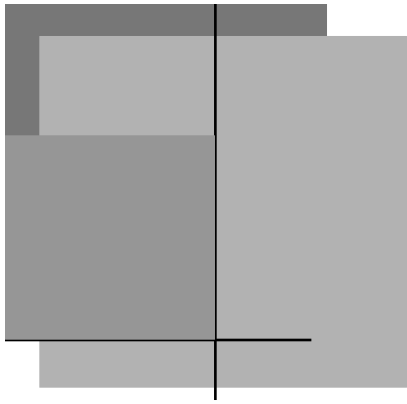
PRETENSION

The downside of being better than everyone else is that people tend to assume you're pretentious

--despair.com

Questions

- About getting a degree
- About Linux
- About IBM or the Linux Technology Center
- About “life in the real world”



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April 19, 2019

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TAKE-HOME EXAMS

The cruelest trick a professor can pull on you is to make you think you've outsmarted him.

-- Me



The short story

PRESSURE

It can turn a lump of coal into a flawless diamond, or an average person into a perfect basketcase.

-- despair.com