Thursday, April 22, 2021

Dear Codecademy Engineering Team,

I am writing to apply for your Software Engineering Apprenticeship position on your team. From my earliest memories, I've always loved to learn. I taught myself to play guitar and built a car from scratch with my father as a teenager. I've studied multiple human languages, and I picked up HTML and CSS in college. For years I built sites for family and friends, including the first website for my family's business. A few years ago, I decided to get more serious about learning modern coding technologies. I started using the Codecademy platform and then enrolled in the Building Websites from Scratch intensive. I was pleased to find that I loved it. Committing myself and my time each day and seeing the progression of knowledge was fantastic. Studying and growing my skills more each day, I decided I could make this love of coding a career path. Codecademy gave me confidence as I learned more and more each day. This confidence allowed me to pivot my career and make a huge change in my life. I still use the Codecademy platform to learn new skills. I am excited to help Codecademy do the same for others.

Last year I completed a bootcamp at General Assembly(GA). Going back to school after a long hiatus was a challenge. Working on my first project building out a roulette game, I got stuck in the process early on. It was a weekend and my instructors and classmates were not online. Searching the web was returning no results for my issue. Our class had a Slack channel for asking questions, and I learned a valuable skill that weekend. As I wrote out my question, I discovered a new way of searching for the answer. I went back to the web, learned a little but not enough to fix the issue. I re-wrote the question and continued through this process of refining, searching, and re-writing. Ultimately, I still had to ask for help on the project but my questions were much more clear. This was one of the most important things I learned at GA: how to seek out knowledge. This process of refining the search, incorporating the knowledge found, and clarifying the question again is how I push through the everyday failures on the road to becoming a better engineer. Post bootcamp, I still use this practice as I continue to learn new skills including GraphQL, TypeScript, and state management in React.

During my time at General Assembly, we did a 24 hour hackathon focused on building an app to make life better during the pandemic. I worked alongside three UX designers and one other engineer. Our team had limited time to come up with a plan, while ensuring that we were aligned and working collaboratively throughout. This posed some challenges, since this required effective communication across the design and engineering teams. It was clear from the beginning that everyone had different assumptions of each others' abilities. Setting time limits for brainstorming, we were able to agree on an app idea. We decided to reconvene early the next morning.

At that point, it was clear that we were not on the same page. Engineering and design each needed information from the other, but personality conflicts were dividing the team as whole and each subgroup. As time was limited, I sat down with the lead designer and discussed a game plan. We focused on what we could accomplish with the time left: what parts of the app were essential builds for presentation and the crucial pieces of wireframe needed to complete them. We each went back to our groups and tried to prioritize. I set a course of action with the other engineer, concentrating on the parts of the app that would be shown first in the pitch.

At presentation, our app was not where we would have liked. We focused on what did work and showed the design team's mock ups of our ideas. Our collaboration prevailed as we ultimately finished third overall in the competition. From this experience, I discovered the importance of setting clear expectations and having separate teams work collectively. Moving forward I've gained a better understanding of what the design team's focus is. I am learning their terminology to make cross communication easier.

Outside of work, I am a rower at the Atlanta Rowing Club, where teamwork is crucial to success. I am currently pursuing my first coaching certificate from USRowing and have been coaching and helping teammates for years. I bring this team-oriented perspective to my professional life, as well. I am excited about the opportunity to bring my skills to Codecademy in hopes of growing as an engineer and collaborating with a fantastic team. Please take a look at my portfolio here: https://www.karenlobinperkins.com/. I look forward to hearing from you! Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Lobin Perkins