

Techie BABY

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Introduction: The Questions Techie-Wannabes Ask The Most

The Burning Pain And The Inevitable Fear: The Questions Techie-Wannabes Ask the Most

"How did you make a career change to tech?" I have been asked over a hundred times last year.

When I told my family and friends I landed a job on a pure tech role, their jaws hit the ground.

I was an advertising executive. Also, I was known for a technological dumb.

People was curious to know WHY and HOW I made the change.

Over the past couple of months I've gotten emails from people who wants to transition into tech without relevant degree or prior experience. These emails centered on the newbie questions I had asked when I started out. I felt the pain from the questions and the fear from making the leap.

Questions like:

- "How do I know working in tech is "really" for me?"
- "Do I need to just pick something to learn and the love will follow as I I improve?"
- "What is the right level of dabbling vs. committing in learning a wide range of tech topics?"

After the soul-searching questions, there were limited beliefs toward the reality:

- "My skills don't match up what the job listing are asking for!"
- "I can't get the job without the experience but I can't get the experience without the job!"
- "I don't have time to learn the tech skills on the side! I have a full time job."

"How can I convince an employer to hire me for a tech role?"

The soul-searching questions danced with the limited beliefs and led to the ultimate question

almost stopped me from making the leap:

"How realistic is the idea of career change to tech?"

This guide aims to provide the answers for these questions.

The Answers: Why This Guide Is for You

This guide is a step-by-step guide which is tested and proven by a group of techie-babies

who were once techie wannabes, including me.

Been there, done that.

It will walk you through the fear, the anxiety and the ambiguity in making a career change to

tech involved:

The fear of uncertainty

The audacity of starting over from scratch

• The imposter syndrome

The slow progress of self-learning tech skills

I'm still experiencing all of them today; but I know how to manage it now.

I'm just a student in tech like you; but I'm one step ahead.

Career transition into tech is possible and can be fun, as long as you take the right

approach.

Good luck! And see you on the other side.

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Here's the Inconvertible Truth: Transition into Tech Is Feasible

Any advice for career changes with non-tech backgrounds who want to jump into the tech world?

I have wide array of social problem solving and team building skills and would like to get into product management. What are some first steps in making the transition?



Does this sound familiar to you? I was exactly like that.

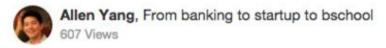
You consider yourself as a top performer in your industry, but you feel the need for a change to tech.

I hear this all the time.

Meet the lawyer who quits to join a tech company.



Meet the Investment banker who quits to join a tech company.



(Repost of a blog post)

Having made a transition from finance to a tech startup, I get asked for tips on making the same transition. I always find this a bit humbling, because it reminds me of how unprepared I was in making this jump.

Meet the Musician who quits to join a tech company.

Curious about switching to a career in tech? Here's how I did it!



Melissa Travers MSFT 27 Apr 2015 8:59 AM PO



"I still knew literally almost nothing, but in my late twenties I had started my path toward a career in technology despite having no credentials and no training."

Melissa T.

You read articles like these; they give you more confidence you want to pursue it.

But you don't know if it is a feasible idea still.

Is it Possible to Transition to a Career in Tech?

By Catherine Conlan | March 02, 2015



Even though you think you have a calling in technology, you don't have the resources – time and money – to become a techie.

How To Make A Career Change Into Tech

By Janet Scarborough Civitelli, Ph.D. Last updated: Saturday, December 5, 2015

Dear Dr. Civitelli:

Can you advise me about how to make a career change into tech? I think I would working in something related to technology but I don't have any professional experience or education that is very relevant, and I don't have the money or time to go back to school full-time. I hate my current job so I would also like to make a career change sooner rather than later. I have always been attracted to technology and it is the only industry that sustains my interest. If I want to make a living doing something in tech, how do I make a career change without going broke or taking 10 years to land a job?

Thank you, Future Techie

Even though you have the courage to make the move, you don't know how.



Who am I telling you all these?

As a techie-baby, I came from the advertising industry. I had been doing project management for an advertising agency for 3+ years. My expertise were client retention, copywriting, marketing, team building, etc. The top tech thing I learned was how to set up a Facebook page and buy adverts for clients, something any Gen-Y people can do.

But, wait! Don't take my words for it.

Meet the waiter who turns to tech after graduated from college.



After a three-month course in computer programming and data analysis, Paul Minton, a former math major, moved up from waiting tables to a job as a data scientist, earning more than \$100,000 a year. Matt Edge for The New York Times

To that end: if you put in the time and effort, you can transition into tech without relevant degree or prior experience.

According to the research data points, the transition takes between 3 months and 18 months.

Among all the techie-babies, I was below average; I spent 12 months to make the career change.

So, instead of focusing on worrying whether you can make the change, focusing on HOW to get hired. Tech industry is where the magical moment happens all the time.

Brad Heidemann, who got a job at Microsoft overseeing sales and guiding the technological buying process for customers, began his career path in the shoe department of Nordstorm, where he started working on the displays and quickly rose through the ranks.

In his post, Why Making a Career Change isn't as Hard as You Think, he gives several tips on career transition:

- Understand what makes you tick at your current job
- Determine your strengths, weaknesses, and goals
- Gather all the information you can and get to know the industry lingo, jargon, and terms
- Reach out to old colleagues who might know more
- Add a different perspective to the new industry with the knowledge from your industry
- Learn, learn and learn

Takeaway #1: Don't worry about whether the career change idea is feasible. Instead, focusing on introspection – take a look of your current role and identify what element most interests and excites you. Set yourself apart with existing skills which seem irrelevant to tech. Get out of the comfort zone and learn the knowledge in tech. Meet techies to tap their brains.

How to Choose a Tech Role that Chains to Your Passion Among a Number of Choices

In Mashable, 15 tech roles were mentioned.

In MakeUseOf, 2 years ago, there were only 7 tech roles mentioned.

When you're entering a new industry, especially one as complicated as the growing tech industry, it can be tough to know if a certain role is your "calling", among the unfamiliar job roles.

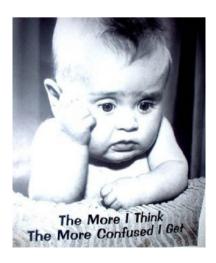
"Will I find something that obsesses me?" - Natalie C.

"Do I need to just pick something and force myself into it and the passion will follow as I improve?" – Benjamin L.

We're facing a number of career routes that we could take in the tech industry. And the worst of all, we can't even commit to the industry as a whole. Let alone a certain role.

"As I try different things, will I "know" tech is for me?" - Carlos H.

We tend to analysis the big picture before making any commitment. We try to analysis the mountain size of market information, but the ever-changing industry doesn't conspire against us, but it doesn't go out of its way to line up all the pins either.



Conditions are never perfect. We, hence, enter the state where we can't make any decision because we bog ourselves down in details, tweaking and endless research.

Analysis by Paralysis.

One of the absolute best articles on the internet regarding this situation is "How to Stop Analysis by Paralysis and Make Great (Decisions) Quickly" by Celestine Chau.

This post cover every steps of the decision-making process... from "prioritization" to "differentiation of big and small decision" followed by "making a choice and let go" and beyond. It paints an accurate picture of what it's like to make a HARD decision.

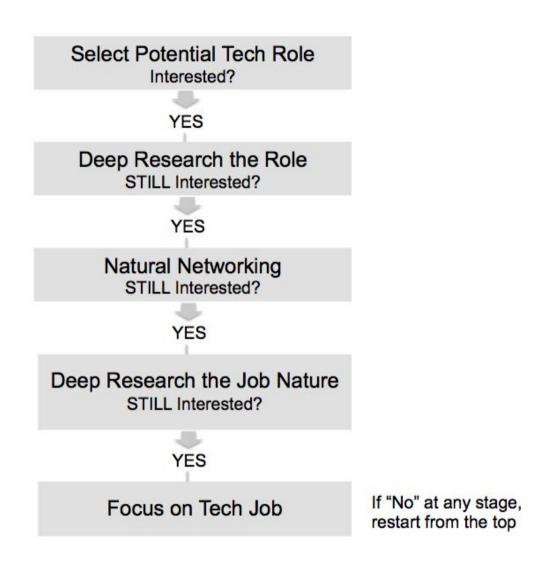
But understanding the state we're in and making a hard decision are not enough. We need to take specific actions toward a career change.

Ramit Sethi, the creator of Find Your Dream Job program had written an article, How to Choose a Career that You'll Love, to lay down a simple process in finding a dream job that can apply to transition into tech:



If "No" at any stage, restart from the top

When I was making the career change to tech, I went through a very similar process, but I had rephrased the "Dream Job" to "Tech Job" to make myself more target-orientated and added one more stage to fit in the ever-changing tech industry.



On top of that, I had generated a number of methods, worksheets, and email templates to tailor-made for my career change.

After researching with a dozen of techie-babies, we tweaked and improved the system, the worksheets and the email templates to fit in the techie-wannabes' situations.



Click to Download - Here

Takeaway #2: Don't force yourself to choose something you have no knowledge of. Instead, do research. Reach out to techies. Run some tests to see if you're a techie-wannabe.

How to Narrow Down the Learning Materials to Avoid Learning Everything

Frustration may lead one to just give up. Do you agree?

"When I look at job postings I am absolutely overwhelmed by the sheer variety of technologies out there. Some companies care about math + algorithms + data structures. Some care about experiences in technology stack XYZ. SQL, css, html, frameworks, javascript, design patterns etc.. etc... etc... " – Zhenka

In the ocean of tech topics, every single one of them takes years to learn and practice.

Where to start?

Even after the deep research on multiple tech roles, you might have a sense of what the techie-baby's job nature looks like, we narrow down the topics, but we quickly get overwhelmed by another question...

"As a newbie, I am overwhelmed by the amount of learning materials out there and the amount of self-direction that one needs to develop." – Leslie K.

When we hit the road to "learn" the essential tech skills, we're excited by many resources with easy accesses, but we get even more overwhelmed. There are just too many resources, both free and not....

"Are there certain topics I should have a good or cursory understanding of regardless?" – Yujin C.

There is really no absolute answer, but there is an optimal answer: **learning by doing**.

In other words: create your own project.

Nyan Fax is a project made by Tom Scott that lets you print out a faxed version of Nyan Cat.

The funny project was posted in YouTube and had made Tom to learn Processing to handle graphical displays and Python to work with a 3D printer.



"Most of the skills I've learned have come from the things I've made: rather than learning for the sake of it, I learn because I need to." – Tom Scott



How did the regular TED speaker – Derek Sivers – learn programming? He learned programming through building the project CDBaby which he had sold for \$22 million and donated the entire amount to a charitable trust for music education.

Note: he was a musician back then and had no relevant degree and prior experience in tech at all.

"If I had taken programming classes in school, I would not have done very well, but when you have to learn something out of necessity it is a great teacher." – Derek Sivers

So pick any idea and start small: learning by doing.

But you might say, "I don't have any good ideas.", like what Seth Godin has written on his blog.

"That's a common mantra among those that say that they want to leap, but haven't, and aren't, and won't." – Seth Godin

So, pick any idea and start a project. That's the fastest way to learn.

Struggle with ideas for projects still?

Here are some resources might help you start:

- Mark Ammay surveyed 300+ people and came up with 100 Creative Ideas for a
 Website that the average person could make
- 1000+ Beginner Programming Projects was created by the author of Ebook
 Programmer's Motivation for Beginners Rajaraman Raghuraman
- IdeaMachine which is a live crowd-sourced collection of ideas for new apps & business ideas that have been requested by the internet. Sorted by Hot, Top and New.

All of these project ideas might be another million dollars business idea; it's great. But, remember: you're not making a Facebook or Google. You're building an easy project so that you can learn the tech skills.

More reference on easy project ideas:

• Jennifer Dewalt had 180 ideas and made 180 easy websites in 180 days.

Once you decide what idea to work on, roll up the sleeve and start to learn. I recommend

checking out these resources in 2 steps, instead of consuming information here and there, to

kick start the learning process:

First, read these 3 articles on LifeHacker written by Adam Dachis and Gina Trapani:

• How to Take Your First Coding Project from Start to Finish

• Learn to Code: The Full Beginner's Guide

• Programmer 101: Teach Yourself How to Code

Second, if you're are a hustler who wants to take a 6-24 weeks period in a highly focused

learning programs in an immersive programming environment, check out:

• The Most Epic Guide to Online Coding Bootcamps which Laurence Bradford had

research the most popular coding bootcamps and gathered feedbacks from the

graduates.

• Bootcamps.in which offers the most comprehensive reviews, side-by-side

comparison of coding bootcamps and programming schools.

Important note: skills and knowledge acquisition is the laser-focus at this point. The project is

only means to an end. It's OK to have an unfinished project as long as you're learning.

Takeaway #3: Build a project. Learn the skills. Make no excuses.

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How to Make Time to Learn When You Have a 60+ Hours Workweek and a Full Time Life

Learning Learning to Program Software Engineering +1

What's the best way to learn how to code while working full-time?

Career Transitions Learning Work Self-Improvement Career Advice

How can I learn something and change careers while working full time?

Do you feel the pain for the word "full-time"? I felt that when I was learning to code after a 12 hours workday at near midnight.

"I just don't have the time to learn a new tech skill. I have a demanding corporate job." –

Brian H.

"I want to learn coding on the side. I don't want to quit my job so I can have the job security.

But my brain isn't functioning after a long day work. On top of that, you have a life to live, it is not just work." – Cecily P.

We have a full-time job and also a full-time life. Sounds like we need to make more time for learning. But time is a finite source.

We can't make more time, but we can increase the quality of time. The first time I read the best selling book, The 4 Hour Work Week, written by Tim Ferris.

I was blown away.

One of Tim's heretical pieces of advice is based on the 80/20 rule. Eighty percent of your productivity comes from 20 percent of your efforts, and likewise, 80 percent of your wasted time comes from 20 percent of the possible causes. So eliminate the 20-percent time wasters, and spend as much energy as possible on the productive 20 percent.

So, start with Tim's advise, let's have a reality check for your time with this tool (elimination of time-waster hack):

RescueTime: A free software productivity tracking tool. Just install it once, and it
sits in the background measuring your productivity. Then, you can see exactly
how many minutes you've spent on productive and unproductive apps at the
RescueTime website. Free up 80 percent of wasted time from 20 percent of the
causes. Also, do the same analysis on your personal life, not just the computer.

Then, reallocate your energy (NOT time),

Read: The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to
High Performance and Personal Renewal, written by Jim Loehr and Tony
Schwartz to understand the concept of energy management

After that, maximize the energy output (productivity hack),

 Use the time blocking method with Cal Newport, the author of Deep Work, to construct a quality time block for learning Finally, shift daily rituals with new habit formation to preserve cognitive power (automation and energy management again),

 Put 10 Zen Habits in your operation system with Leo Babauta to create a new set of daily routine

Takeaway #4: Forget about the traditional sense of time management. Apply 80/20 rule to the reality check for your time. Eliminate the time-wasters. Understand the concept of energy management. Use time blocking to increase the quality of time. Build zen habits around your life.

How to Know When Your Skills Are Ready to Make the Transition

Do you have this kind of anxiety?

"How do I know if my tech skill is good enough to get hired at a company? How much knowledge is enough?" – Kitty K.

Many of us have these types of questions.



Self-taught programmers... how did you get a job? (self.learnprogramming)



I'm a self-taught wannabe programmer, and I'm currently psyching myself out... I'm having trouble understanding how and why someone who doesn't have a CS degree would be hired for any programming position when there's a horde of fresh grads with credentials clamoring for the same gig. However, I know they're out there, and plenty of them read this forum. So if you're one of these people and you wouldn't mind answering...

What do employers look for in self-taught applicants? [closed]



I'm a self-taught programmer about to enter the job market. What I want to know is what is the best way to show my experience to employers?





What do employers want to know about my programming experience? Do employers want to look at code I wrote or could they want to see the software in action? Or do they only care how much my software is being used/how much it has created revenue? Should I write about my design and programming style?



One reader had even asked me once,

"Should I just apply for a job and send the company my resume and test if I'm qualified?" – Ronald K.

I like his "testing" approach very much. But he'll never have any feedback if he doesn't get any response. There is a more direct and effective way to pass the qualification test.

When you were a college student, have you ever come across a question you couldn't figure out the answer after hours of trying?

What did you do?

There are 3 possible solutions to this dilemma:

- 1. Give up
- 2. Ask the classmates who had ALREADY figure out the solutions
- 3. Ask the teachers who KNOW the answer

By the same token, if you want to see if you have the qualification your target companies want, you can either ask the employees who had or have the job you want, or the employer. (assumption made on you're not giving up)

You'll explore target companies with the target tech roles and have your classmates and teachers to answer the qualification question. Beyond that, you'll find out the dream companies you want to work for and pitch them for your dream job at the same time.



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Takeaway #5: Understand that you don't know what you don't know. Treat the tech industry and dream companies as a bunch of colleges. Take the qualification questions to the classmates and teachers, and ask for the answers.

How to Outperform the Job Applicants who Have Relevant

Degree and Prior Experience

You have the skills. You have the relationship with the potential employers. You pave the way to proof you're qualified as a techie-baby...

But you might still ask a similar question like this:



You don't really worry about the process. Instead, you worry about your competitors who – has the relevant degree and prior experience – that you don't have!

Welcome to the world of Impostor Syndrome – the mental killer of top performers.

Impostor Syndrome is a term coined in 1978 by clinical psychologists Dr. Pauline R. Clance and Suzanne A. Imes referring to high-achieving individuals marked by an inability to internalize their accomplishments and a persistent fear of being exposed as "fraud". Despite external evidence of their competence, those exhibiting the syndrome remain convinced that they are frauds and do not deserve the success they have achieved.

Read the full description in Wikipedia.

You're swimming in a pool of top performers. You can't help to compare yourself with them.



You take on a gut punch by yourself...

But you know what? You're not alone.

Even, Sheryl Sandberg, the techie next to the Mark Zuckerberg, is one of the impostor syndrome sufferers.

So the short prescription of the antidote for impostor syndrome is: just stop worrying about it.

And read the article – Feel Like a Fraud? You're Not Alone – written by Rhea Wessel

And the long prescription of the antidote is: use any method what works for you.

Kyle Eschenroeder had written 17 Ways to Overcome Impostor Syndrome in LifeHacker.

The following are my favorite 10:

- Come off it
- Accept that you have had some role in your successes
- Focus on providing value
- Keep a file of people saying nice things about you
- Expose yourself totally
- Remember: being wrong doesn't make you a fake
- Realize that when you hold back, you're robbing the world
- Realize that nobody knows what they're doing
- See credentials for what they are
- Realize that faking things actually does work

Once you win the inner game, master your mind and realize you deserve better, you'll master your actions.

Buckle up, we'll take the mastery actions soon....

You're winning in your head and getting job-ready with the skill sets you have developed for months.



But to the outside world, you're just one of them.

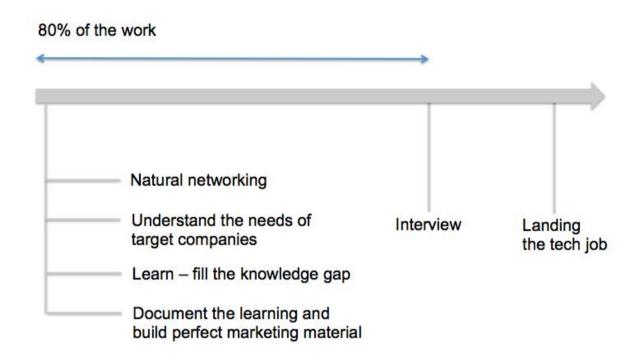


You're just one of thousand of the commodities in the job market.

To set yourself apart from the crowd, you need to face the market and show your work.



In The Proven Method to Check if Your Tech Skill Matches the Employer's Expectation, we mentioned frontloading 80% work before the interview. We need to stack up even more preparation upfront: create your perfect marketing material.



In our research, it happens always that the potential employers want to see some learning process of the techie-wannabe in the natural networking.

"Show me what you got." You don't want this question catches you off-guard.

You want to confidently answer, "Let me walk you through what I've learned lately. blah... blah..." and add a line, "the reason why I learned this because you mentioned to me last time you want to hire a new talent who has this skill."

So, start building your perfect marketing material online. A good place to start is the LinkedIn profile; then extending to a website, etc.

Why online?

Simply because your potential employers LOVE it more than the offline portfolio. I'm not kidding; they like the feeling of clicking through a url for your work rather than opening up a pdf in an email.

You're a techie-wannabe and they're techies. You should feel that too, man.

On top of that, it also make the communication (the constant learning progress update) easier. In whatever form of meeting you're in with the potential employers, you can use the following line to demonstrate your work:

"Check out my online portfolio that I sent you last time. I updated it."

Grace Smith had written an article in Mashable : 20 Tools to Showcase Your Portfolio, which you could use.

So what about the content in the portfolio?

Randle Browning, as a brand new web designer to get work, sums up 5 essential points beautifully in her article, How to Build an Impressive Portfolio when You're New to Tech, at Skillcrush.

- Who you are
- What kind of work you do
- How you do that work
- Where you want to go next
- And who you really want to work with

Let's dissect the strategy here.

It's crucial to understand how the behind-the-scene work. Your marketing material is perfect based ON the potential employers' want (you knew it from directly in touch with them, not on job ad). They needed someone who can do their job and communicate their work.

If you have to hire a helper to keep your house clean, the helper invites you to for a coffee meeting and try to know your need. She is friendly and hasn't ask for a job. In a month, she updates you that she now know how to clean the dirt in your kitchen which your former helper unable to do. She shows you a before and after picture (the perfect marketing material) via an email and ask if you happen to be hiring someone for your house. Looking at the dirt (the problem) and the helper (solution), will you conduct an interview for her?

Every so often, the season techies have a long working history. Most of them can talk the talk. On the other hands, you can only walk the talk.

Walking the talk is the secret weapon most techie-babies used to land their first dream job.

Without a relevant degree and prior experience, I had even outperformed the season techies for a job that the requirement was university graduate in Computer Science with minimum 3 years of relevant working experience.

Please remember: In the research, I'm just one of the techie-babies who is below-average among the top performers.

"If ordinary like me can transition into tech without relevant degree or background, chances are you can do the same." – Aero Wong

Takeaway #6: Overcome the impostor syndrome. Build an online portfolio as perfect marketing material.

Embrace the Suck: Master Your Mind

Takeaway #1: Don't worry about whether the career change idea is feasible. Instead, focusing on introspection – take a look of your current role and identify what element most interests and excites you. Set yourself apart with existing skills which seem irrelevant to tech. Get out of the comfort zone and learn the knowledge in tech. Meet techies to tap their brains.

Takeaway #2: Don't force yourself to choose something you have no knowledge of. Instead, do research. Reach out to techies. Run some tests to see if you're a techie wannabe.

Takeaway #3: Build a project. Learn the skills. Make no excuses.

Takeaway #4: Forget about the traditional sense of time management. Apply 80/20 rule to the reality check for your time. Eliminate the time-wasters. Understand the concept of energy management. Use time blocking to increase the quality of time. Build zen habits around your life.

Takeaway #5: Understand that you don't know what you don't know. Treat the tech industry and dream companies as a bunch of colleges. Take the qualification questions to the classmates and teachers, and ask for the answers.

Takeaway #6: Overcome the impostor syndrome. Build an online portfolio as perfect marketing material.

Your First Step: Master Your Action

In two decades, I have been labelling myself as a non-techie. I considered myself as a people person. I would "delegate" all the tech work to my brother who graduated from a computer science degree. I remember the first time I touched a computer was the moment I needed to use Excel to do my assignment. I was forced to learn how Windows 97 works. This made me hating technology and computer science grads. Because every time I asked my brother a question, he would use his knowledge to manipulate and laugh at me.

This was where, how and when I slowly built up an invisible script: I don't have talent in tech.

Today, I am working at the technology department at one of the oldest journals in Asia.

I'm working in tech!

How intense I am when I'm writing - I'm working in tech. I feel like I can do anything in the world. I become Superman; because I had overcame the biggest invisible script and challenge in my life.

How was I able to overcome this invisible script? I applied a skill I learned from a famous best-selling author in the tech world, James Altucher. I watched an interview he had done with another best selling author.

After watching the interview, I burned my invisible script into ashes.

After watching the interview, I burned my invisible script into ashes.

I want to stress this action again - I burned my invisible script into ashes; because I have actually done it.

By how? James Altucher talked about a method which would cause chemical reaction to our brains. If we were afraid of something, we should write it down on a piece of paper and then burn it. We would be relieved from our fear as the end result.

I got stuck in life at a corporate job. I enjoyed the work but felt the "calling" from tech. I didn't

dare make a change. Throughout my youth, I was a sporty dude. I liked to win and hated to

lose. If I lost a competition and gained only the silver medal, I would beat myself up for a

year until I practiced to a point I could gain the gold medal in the next one.

In other words, I was afraid of - the fear of failure - which was my biggest invisible script.

So, one day, I skipped the lunch and came up with an excuse to avoid all colleagues. Then I

stole a lighter from a colleague (I was frugal and didn't smoke). I came to a harbour, looking

over the ocean, and I took out a notecard and a pen. I wrote down four words - the fear of

failure.

I fished the lighter out of my pocket and set a fire on the corner of the notecard. My "failure"

on the notecard was slowly burned away, then the "fear". I released the paper as the fire was

about to burn my hand. I saw my fear of failure burning into ashes, flying to the ocean,

becoming smaller and smaller until it totally disappeared.

From that moment on, I have always been seeing this scene whenever I faced a setback in

life. Whenever I felt the fear of failure, I knew I had already burned it. It was nothing.

Your first step: Burn the goddamn invisible script

Takeaway #7: Before looking at your life through the windshield, look at the rear-view mirror,

once and for all. Contemplating if there is any invisible script which is holding your back.

Burn the invisible script. Make. The. Leap.

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Appendix A - Influencers on Twitter

https://twitter.com/brad_heidemann

https://twitter.com/mtravers

https://twitter.com/paulsef11

https://twitter.com/ramit

https://twitter.com/tomscott

https://twitter.com/sivers

https://twitter.com/ThisIsSethsBlog

https://twitter.com/markammay

https://twitter.com/raja4tech

https://twitter.com/JenniferDewalt

https://twitter.com/Adachis

https://twitter.com/tferriss

https://twitter.com/tonyschwartz

https://twitter.com/sherylsandberg

https://twitter.com/joyceakiko

https://twitter.com/randlebrowning

https://twitter.com/zen_habits

https://twitter.com/finkd

https://twitter.com/rheawessel

https://twitter.com/kyleschen

https://twitter.com/Gracesmith

Appendix B - Resources

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