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The Only Step You Need to Progress in Your Career as a Developer or Engineer.

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I don't usually like to write articles about myself, as it feels a bit self-indulgent, but I thought it would be useful to show examples of how I became 'T' shaped and how my career progressed.
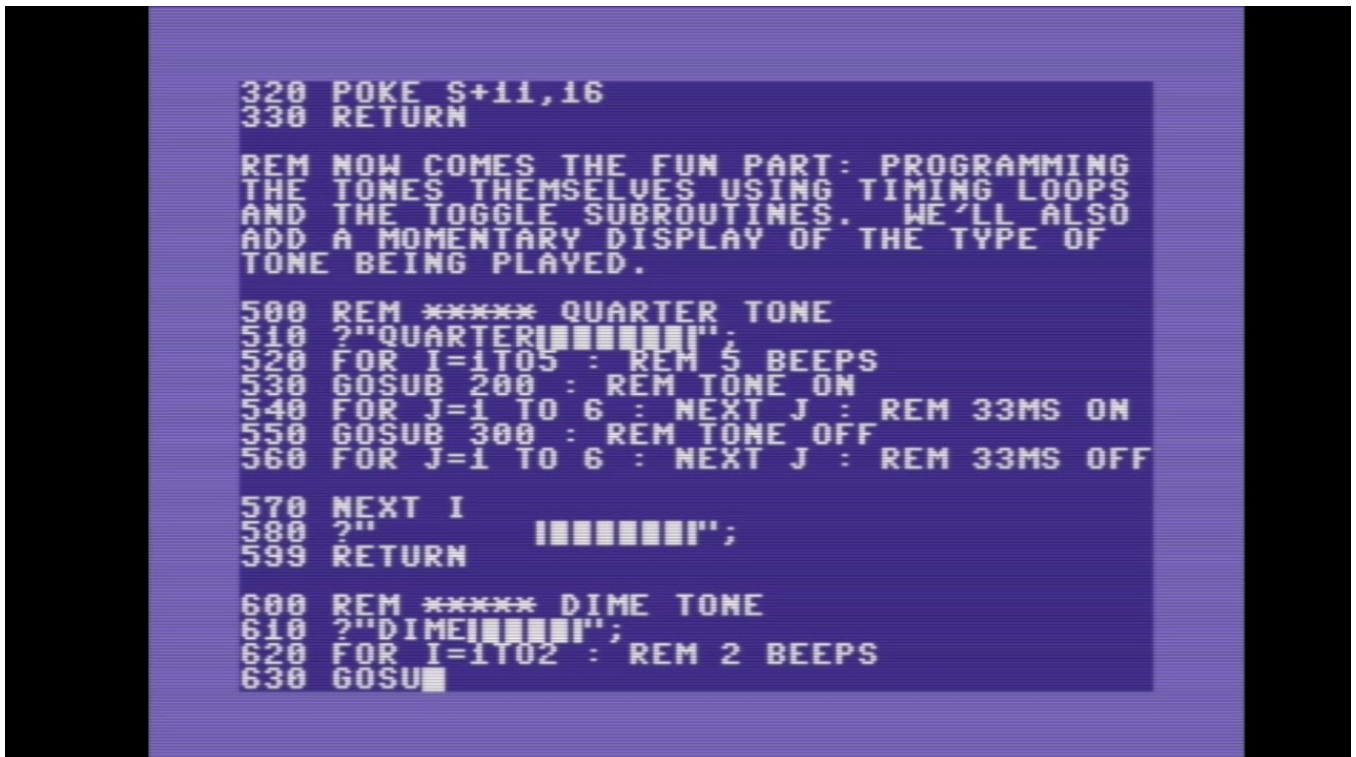
Introduction

I've been working in tech for over ten years.
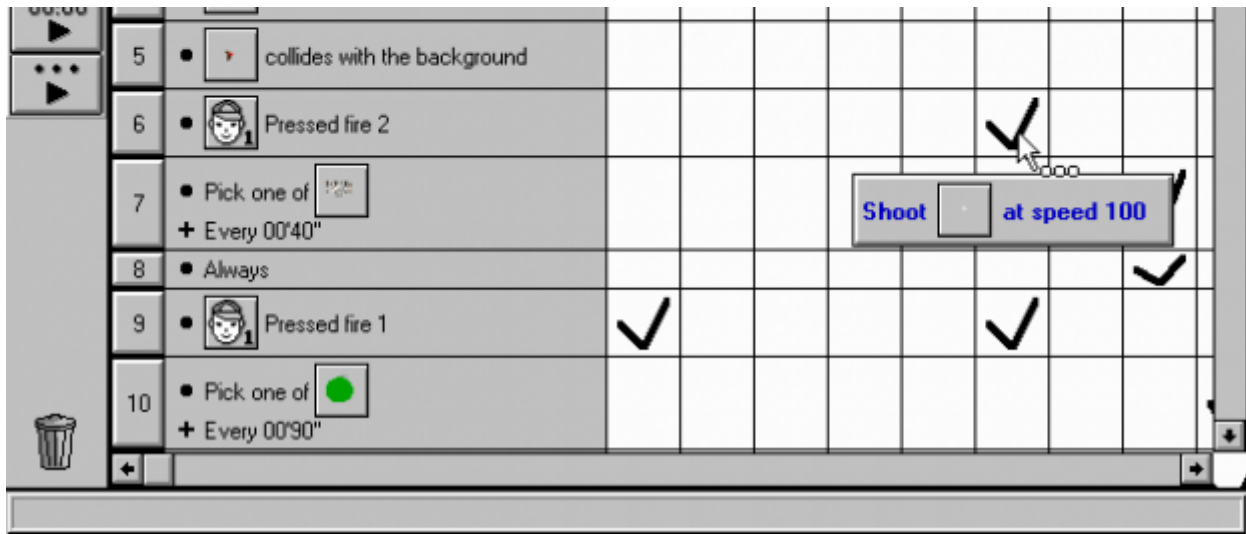
My passion first started when I was young.

When I was five years old, my parents bought a commodore 64, and it sparked something inside of me.

I enjoyed playing games and eventually going on to writing small bits of code in basic and watching the output.

As a teenager, I played a lot with a tool my parents got for me called 'Klik and Play' which was a drag and drop game creator, which allowed scripting of events to create custom behaviours. It was awesome and helped me understand event-driven programming.
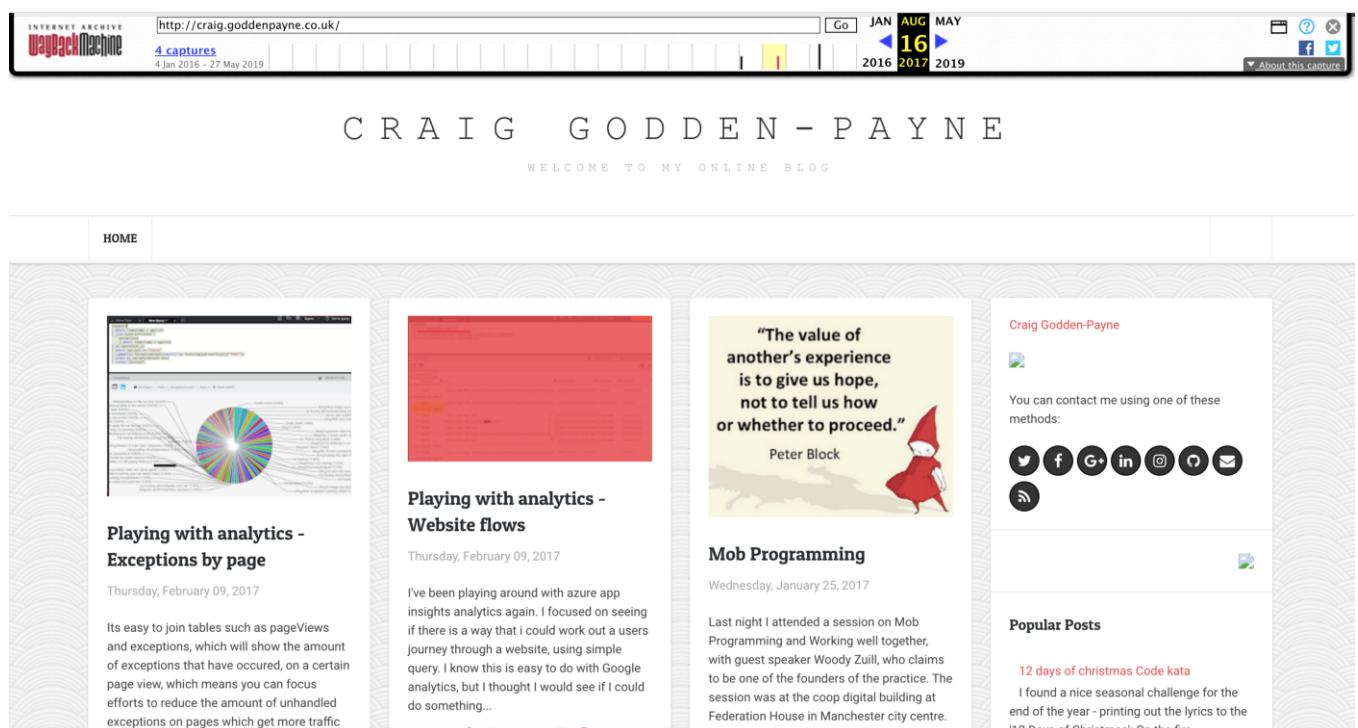
As I got older, I moved onto web development, before eventually attending courses at college and university before getting my first tech job.

Over the years, I have spent thousands of hours reading articles, blog posts, white papers, tutorials and stack overflow.

Working in tech, and understanding core concepts take time and are hard work!

One thing that has accelerated my career has undoubtedly been the ability to adapt and be more 'T' shaped, this and writing my own blog, which has reaffirmed the tech I use day to day.

What is 'T' shaped?

The centre of the 'T' represents the experience of understanding a particular area of technology or framework. The top part of the 'T' refers to an ability to collaborate with experts from other disciplines, gaining even greater understanding and knowledge from this collaboration.

An example of this would be someone who has expert core skills in a language (or many languages) such as C# or Java, but also has a reliable (but not necessarily expert) understanding of another technology or multiple, such as DevOps or Marketing.

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A 'T' shaped journey

Everyone's journey in tech seems to be different; my journey is probably very different from yours. Here is a timeline of my interest in tech and my career to date:

- 1990 — Basic playing around on the commodore 64

- 1995 — Html and basic markup

- 1998 — Ecmascript in some form for basic game creation

- 2000 — Flash sites and small games

- 2002 — Started college and learned Delphi and C++

- 2004 — Started university and learned Java and more advanced C++

- 2006 — Self-taught C#, VB and .Net, more advanced Javascript

- 2007 — Junior Developer: working with Delphi and MSAccess

- 2008 — Junior Developer Next job in WPF / Soap Services C#

- 2009 — Junior Developer: ASP.Net Webforms / Soap Services C#

- 2012 — Mid-level Developer in ASP.Net MVC / Razor / WCF

- 2013 — Started a blog and technical writing articles

- 2015 — Senior Developer in ASP.Net MVC / Razor / WCF / Test Automation / Continous integration

- 2016 — Tech lead: Front End Technologies (ASP.Net, React, Angular) / Marketing / Social / Continuous integration / Cloud

- 2018 — Principle Software Engineer: PHP / dotnetcore / Serverless / Continuous delivery / Analysis / Big Data / Security

- 2019 — Cloud consultant: AWS / CI/CD / Automation / Python / DevOps / NextJS / Java / dotnetcore

As you can see, as I gained more experience, I started to become more 'T' shaped, which has helped me to secure better jobs and work up the career ladder.

One of the most beneficial things I did was start a personal blog.

I found great comfort and eliminating imposter syndrome by writing about what I am learning/have learned to help others on their developer journey.

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How do you become more rounded?

I think the main aim is to have an open mind and listen to people.

No one likes a Rock Star or Hero and I am a true believer that you will always learn something from someone else, regardless of level or ability.

It's also important to share. Attend brown bag sessions, meetups, host your own and talk with other about tech, patterns and pros and cons of doing something a certain way.

Many people in tech can be very closed-minded. Sticking to only a handful of technologies over their career. This is a problem and it happens everywhere.

I personally always keep an ear to the ground for new tech to use, most job roles I switch to, go from one extreme to another and I feel as though it has helped me out understand broad concepts better.

I attend hackathons, write articles about obscure topics that would only gain a few views, I do online courses, I pass certifications, basically anything to increase my own personal skills, and allow me to give something back.

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Why is it beneficial to be more rounded?

A 'T' shaped engineer will enable companies to take on new challenges and grow at a rapid pace.

A 'T' shaped engineer can contribute to a project end-to-end, meaning you could have smaller teams with greater responsibility.

A 'T' shaped engineer is usually more focused and less confused with the bigger picture because they can compare problems with a wide breadth of technologies and processes they have used in their past.

If you enjoyed this post, check out a few of my others:

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