

Personal Development

Where I've come from.

With a background in insurance and pension administration, it wasn't quite obvious for me to choose a career as a web developer. But being out of a job for a long time as a result of a bad burnout I was looking for a way to reshape my future, because in my opinion, a 47 year old single white male shouldn't be at home staring at walls. So I took a leap of faith and enrolled in a Coding Bootcamp called [CodeGorilla](#) in Emmen, The Netherlands, without even knowing if working in ICT would be interesting or suitable to me. It turned out to be one of the best decisions I've ever made. In this document I want to explain what CodeGorilla means to me, where I am at this moment and where I want to be in the future.

Where I am.

The CodeGorilla Bootcamp started out with a 30 hours Hackathon about Smart City & Smart Industry and was the beginning of a selection procedure which was hard and difficult. The result being that my fellow students and me were fully motivated at the start of the course. For me this hackathon was all about getting out of my comfort zone. To produce a viable solution for a case presented by the organization within 30 hours was a challenging experience. And to pitch your idea for 150 people and a jury took me right out of my comfort zone, but really convinced me that I was on the right track.

Already I was noticing a change within myself concerning motivation and commitment and at the start of the actual bootcamp I was fully pumped and ready to go, but still with hardly any programming experience whatsoever. The only thing I could do was to keep my wits about me and my eyes and ears open.

At the three months bootcamp the learning technique we used was entrepreneurial learning, the regime was marine-like and information was really pumped into us. Those first three to four weeks really shook my brain and body and caused a tremendous re-activation of my thinking and learning powers in a way that is really positive and lasting. Besides learning new skills, I've also been given a new way to look at life and the possibility to define my own strategy to become a happy and productive human being.

What have I learned.

One could argue that three months isn't a lot of time to really learn how to code and in some ways that is true. But because of entrepreneurial learning I have been given proper tools to develop myself. I've learned to work agile with scrums, sprints and backlogs and the teaching method was nothing like I have ever experienced before. There were no traditional classes and few book lessons, but instead we had to work on a real project, existing of a website to promote ourselves, with a real client.

The fourteen students were divided in three divisions: UI/UX, Backend and Frontend and were supposed to work together. Besides actual coding a lot of other skills needed to be established. For example communication (within your own team and with other teams), planning, deadlines and flexibility. Coaches constantly threw us of our game by distracting us with spontaneous pitches or presentations. Many times about an unknown topic. The reason behind it was to keep us agile, getting us out of our comfort zone and still be able to keep focus and it is proven that by teaching yourself, you learn faster and more lasting.

I was put in the Frontend-team and that meant that I was responsible for the functionality of the different pages and to prepare these pages for design and backend. The website was build with AngularJS, which, in the beginning, was quite hard to understand (with no prior coding experience) and a few deadlines were missed, to our great disappointment. It became clear that how you handle these disappointments is very important for your own development. You can't dwell on these things and pushing on despite disappointment makes a stronger developer.

In the end it became clear that the website we produced together wasn't good enough. There was no clean coding, we didn't take responsiveness into account and there was no universal design. Again a great disappointment when this website was cancelled, but also a startingpoint for a new project.

This new project was about a teahouse that provides workexperience for people with a distance to employment. Because we needed a admin friendly website with a database we used Wordpress to produce this website, which is online as we speak: [Twessers](#) . Our team existed of three persons and none of us ever worked with Wordpress before.

The final project is a personal portfolio website, which is meant as a showcase for the skills I picked up during the course. However, I do realize I'm only starting to understand coding. The more you learn about a subject, the more you realize you still have a lot to learn. This realization, and others, provides me with an outlook on the IT market which is very healthy and will ensure my eagerness to learn new things and truly develop my existing skills.

Where I want to be.

The next period I hope to specialize more in Frontend work. I'm fascinated by JavaScript and connected frameworks such as Angular. My intention is to become that guy, that can create a websolution from scratch, with all the trimmings like responsiveness, clean coding and a neat design. Design however is a skill on my bucketlist to enhance, because I know what I like and I have a strong opinion about it, but producing a cool design is still difficult for me. Certain people are just better at it, but knowing your weaknesses can also be a strenght.

During the Bootcamp I attended several extra-curricular meetings and hackathons with a variety of topics. For example PHP, IT-Security and a seminar on writing, publishing and personal branding. It has become a real hobby of mine and one I will certainly keep up. It wil make sure that my knowledge stays up to date and gives me the opportunity to let myself be inspired by inspiring people.

To summarize: During the Bootcamp I really got a taste of web developing, I started to develop my hard skills like HTML, CSS and JavaScript and I sharpened or developed my 21st Century skills. At the same time I realize that I've only just started in web development, but also that I have composed a set of tools which will help me make it in IT. Together with my newly discovered self-confidence, my enhanced work-ethics and my ever growing network I am confident I can make it as a valuable and productive web developer and I hope to be able to add a social component to my list of projects.

Still want to know more?

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