

Interview Questions and Answers:

Q: Were there any tips or tricks you wish you would've known prior to taking the class and learning the material that I could now benefit from?

A: *My biggest advice if you are serious about web development is teach yourself vanilla javascript. If I remember this class correctly its focused more on html and php development and a bit of jQuery, but javascript will help you so much as a developer it is crazy.*

Q: Did you find it difficult, or was it normal, for you to grasp and understand the key concepts and coding from class?

A: *Web development kinda came easy to me. I worked a lot with computers and web development just made sense to me. I did some supplemental work like I taught myself javascript and more complex jQuery. I also went out and got freelance jobs and internships which helped a lot. You learn way more on the job than you ever do in classes.*

Q: Now that you have some distance from PW, how would you critique your own portfolio? Are there changes you would/are going to make to it?

A: *I think it's a little generic. I used a framework to make it because I was in school and working 35 hours a week and I had limited time. I think I would have put a little more work into making it stand out a bit. Now that I have a lot more web development experience I would remove the writing portions of my portfolio. When I was newly graduated and I didn't have a ton of experience I needed anything to set me apart a bit. Now these elements aren't as relevant to my career path. I would also put screenshots of self hosted examples of work. I originally provided a link to prezentme.com, but since that company went under the site is no longer hosted. I would put some screencaps with specific improvements that I made.*

Q: Why did you choose the pieces in your portfolio and how easy or difficult was it to choose pieces of work that best represented your skill sets to employers?

A: *I chose the pieces because I wanted to show my diversity. PW gives you a lot of different tools and I think it's important to highlight all of them. I have 2 sections web development and writing. I began with my development experience because I was looking for a development job. I used the start up that I was working at Prezentme.com (since gone under) as my big example because I did a lot of work on that. Then I did some UI design experience and some freelance work. I chose the writing portions to show that I have a diverse group of skills that might set me apart from other candidates who have a more pure development background. I think it was fairly easy to choose them. I went with the projects that I thought and the most relevant information.*

Q: Did employers actually look at your portfolio in great detail when applying for a position?

A: *I'm not really sure how in depth my employers looked at my portfolio. Most of the interview questions focused on my prior work experience. I responded to questions and referenced my portfolio, but the bulk of my interviews focused on prior experience and trying to find out if I was fit for a development team.*

Q: If so, what kind of feedback did you get from those employers and did any of it shock you?

A: *I haven't received a lot of feedback on my portfolio from interviews. If I start searching for jobs again that could be an interesting question to ask. In interviews most of my questions focused on the company I was at and what they were looking for rather than my personal portfolio.*

Q: In a portfolio you're really supposed to showcase the best sides of you to the employer, so how did you articulate those "best sides" in yours? (said another way, how did you get your visual brand across)

A: *I think I really tried to let my resume and my work speak for itself. I wanted to make my portfolio simple, clean, and easy to navigate. I think the best visual design speaks for itself. If you have to articulate it then you have already lost what you were trying to gain from it.*

Q: What did you struggle with most when making your portfolio, and what tools did you use to overcome those struggles?

A: *I struggled with time the most. I kinda did a slap-dash job in my opinion, because I was so busy. At the time that I made my portfolio I was working 35+ hours a week and doing my classes and planning a wedding with my now wife and I rushed through it. A developers most important tool is caffeine.*

Q: Moving into the real world of jobs and adulthood, how have you seen your portfolio help you, whereas it couldn't have if you didn't have one?

A: *I think the most important thing a portfolio does is get a foot in the door. It lets an employer know that you have the skills that they want and then it is on you in the interviews to show them that you are the person with the skills they want. At the end of the day skills are skills and anyone with a pulse can be taught a skill, but the interview is where the heavy lifting happens and you show a personality and an interest level that sets you apart from others. Portfolios are really important though because they are the golden ticket that gets you into the chocolate factory so you can prove to Wonka you aren't a jerk. A good portfolio shows from the beginning that you know what you are doing and makes the question about your skill set easy to answer.*

Q: Do you have any insider tips for me as to what employers and the job market is looking for in a Professional Writer these days?

A: *Hmm I would say that if you want a good job you need to find something you are good at and focus on it. I really like CSS and javascript so I went the front end development route and I am super happy with it. I would also say get an internship or a job in your intended field. Most employers are looking for experience. Try to get some of it early and it will help you a lot. Never be afraid to freelance. It's a great way to make money and you learn a lot.*

Synthesis:

I'll be honest, coming into this course I was intimidated. I thought the teacher was speaking a completely different language. With a little insight from Stephen, the gentleman I interviewed, I was able to see she in fact was. Nevertheless with that insight and some encouraging words from Stephen I now feel more comfortable, than I was, with this web development language. My interview with Stephen allowed me to realize first and foremost that it's not all as complex as it may first appear. He elaborates this in a few of his answers, explaining that as a web developer patience and caffeine are your best friends. Moreover, it's not always easy on the first run through, but a little extra time and effort put into it will always lead to success. Stephen's answers echoed further that if someone wanted to become a successful web developer, he or she should take the time individually to familiarize themselves with many of the more complex design features (vanilla javascript, advanced jQuery, CSS, etc). These, he said, are at times what help you get the job compared to the next interviewee. Another tip Stephen stressed throughout many of his answers was that almost always your portfolio is just a foot in the door. As he says, "they are the golden ticket that gets you into the chocolate factory so you can prove to Wonka you aren't a jerk". I think Stephen couldn't have said it better. Your portfolio should be enough for an employer to become interested and want to listen and learn more. Stephen stressed in his answer to the seventh question that a portfolio's design should be "simple, clean, and easy to navigate". He states further that if you have to articulate further what you're able to do through your work, then you've already lost what your work should be doing for you. For example, a person should be able to present the diversity of his work through his work alone, not by stating something like: *And here you can see both my web development work and my writing work*. Finally, Stephen emphasizes that your portfolio should represent who you are today, not who you were while taking this class and starting your portfolio. He states one of the biggest benefactors to getting the job, as opposed to not, is highlighting your most recent work or showing the improvements you've made from one project to the next, displaying your ability to work through trial and error and persevere. Overall Stephen's interview has settled my nerves to say the least. His interview gave me the ideal tools and tips to move forward confidently knowing I'll come out with a successful portfolio so long as I actively try.