Shareef

Based on the video, what's your take on the DBC experience? What is your impression of DBC? How do you see yourself engaging with this type of culture? Have your expectations of DBC changed? If so, how? Are you excited to participate in this kind of learning environment? Does it make you nervous?

Talk about what came up for you and anything you want in addition to the questions above.

I know, I’ll learn to code. 2-3 years of frustration as I tried to work with, in and amongst techies, and tech companies, in an attempt to realize my own entrepreneurial aspirations, and it was time. Time to work out why I was paying so much money for great work (and often too much money for mediocrity). Why I’ve often felt that devs were recruiting me, that my ideas weren’t worthy enough or that my projects and propositions were such an incidental and unimportant part of a geeks portfolio to be of interest/warrant their time? I have an MBA. I have experience. I have a pipeline of apps just waiting to hit the market (in my head). So what is all the fuss about?

I’ve tinkered with HTML & CSS over the last year or so, and having confidently got CodeAcademy’s track under my belt, I was ready, yes? Ready to take coding a little more seriously and if I’m going to do this, then an intensive bootcamp has to be the way, yes? Surely this is the best way to get a good overall feel for the full-stack environment, learn the jargon and demystify the world of code. I’ll show “them”.

So where and how? Well, if you’re going to learn to code, where better than at the mothership, so off to San Francisco, away from all the distractions of the UK, I headed. And if I’m going to do this, then let’s do it properly - an intensive bootcamp appears to be a pretty robust option. 9 weeks intensive coding – I can do that. I’ll go from zero to hero in less than 3 months and transform my life, my business and my credibility, yes?

And through a combination of luck and good fortune with a sprinkling of intellect, charisma and hunger to learn, I managed to secure a place on the prestigious Dev Bootcamp, one of the best intensive coding programs in the US.

And then they hit me with the prep. Prep? Sorry, did you not hear? I completed my HTML/CSS codeacademy course. I’m match fit.

Sorry, HTML/CSS is ‘not’ coding, you only build a web page with those?

Oh.

To build a web “app” you need to know the full-stack environment, so your tools (Chrome Dev Tools, Browsers, Text Editors, Command Line, GitHub, Driver Codes). To know your front end, you need advanced HTML/CSS, Javascript, UX, UI. For your backend, you need at least Ruby, Node, SQL, Server Landscapes.

Oh.

And I need to know all the basics of all the above ‘before’ I start the course?

Oh.

It usually takes 9 weeks of prep, sometimes more. We also cover blogging, social media, engineer empathy, communication skills, all taught through a multi-disciplinary learning styles of video, audio, lectures, pair and solo coding. We even throw yoga and mindfulness in.

At this point, I thought I’d better check out my return flight. Non-refundable. Mmm…

So I took a deep breath and started. And wow. What a wall-of-work. Learning, practice, challenges, blogs, technical stuff, non-technical stuff – a condensed and abridged computer science course. Be under no illusions, each week’s activities take-a-week. Somethings I got, many things I didn’t. Most I revisited, a few I put in a dark box under the bed… The volume, complexity, breadth and pace was (and is[[1]](#footnote-1)) overwhelming. And this is BEFORE I’ve started?!?

I can’t do this. I don’t understand. This is really hard. Oh, ok I get that bit now. Hang on, that makes a bit more sense. Oh no, thought I had it and no, that’s not the answer I was expecting. I can’t do this. I don’t understand. This is really hard…

I looked long and hard at my return flight. Maybe I could sweet-talk someone at the airline. Fake an illness? A death? Maybe I just buy another flight…

And then I watched Shareef’s video – I’d saved it for half way through Phase 0 – because I somehow missed it amongst avalanche of materials. And I listened and I exhaled.

Shareef wants students to be in the kitchen and not at the restaurant table; to have an apron and hat on, not a menu in their hand. Feeling stupid is ok. Feeling like the dunce of the class is ok. Thinking that you’ve been accidentally enrolled, is ok. Most people feel the same. Ok, there’s the MIT and Harvard CS grads that may see newbies like me as someone to avoid... But if they new it all, they wouldn’t be on the course either. I exhaled further.

And everyone hits the program at different speeds and with different experience – hence a focus on the heavy prep, so that you’ve got the first 20% under your belt before walking in the classroom. Something I hadn’t expected (in my mad dash to get over to San Fran and ‘get on it’) but makes total sense.

He wants students to walk in “hungry, mad and inspired”, well I’m definitely all of those. Co-creation is an essential part – a philosophy I have been banging on about for an age. “Go fast, go alone; go together, go far”.

I am loving what this man has to say and his approach to education and how best to learn to code. It’s as much about learning the landscape, mindset and communication skills, as the coding know-how, all required to succeed. Yeah, I’m nervous as hell. But that’s ok. So is everyone else.

So I took a breath. Got some sleep. Opened my pc up at dawn’s crack. And said, I can do this. And I will.

1. In the middle of phase 0 at the time of writing [↑](#footnote-ref-1)