37

Never Stop Learning

10. I will never stop learning and improving my craft.

A programmer never stops learning.

I'm sure you've heard it said that you should learn a new language every year. Well, you should. A good programmer should know a dozen languages or so.

And not just a dozen varieties of the same language. Not just C, C++, Java, and C#. Rather, you should know languages from many different families.

You should know a statically typed language like Java or C#. You should know a procedural language like C or Pascal. You should know a logic language like Prolog. You should know a stack language like Forth. You should know a dynamically typed language like Ruby. You should know a functional language like Clojure or Haskell.

You should also know several different frameworks. And several different design methodologies, and several different development processes.

I don't mean to say you should be an expert in all these things; but you should make a point to expose yourself to them at significantly more than a cursory level.

Indeed, the list of things you should similarly expose yourself to is virtually endless. Our industry has experienced rapid change over the decades, and that change is likely to continue for some time. You have to keep up with it.

And that means you have to keep on learning. Keep reading books and blogs. Keep watching videos. Keep going to conferences and user groups. Keep going to training courses. Keep learning.

Pay attention to the treasured works of the past. The books written in the '60s and '70s and '80s are wonderful sources of insight an information. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that all that old stuff is out of date. There is not much in our industry that actually goes out of date. Respect the effort and accomplishments of those who came before you, and study their advice and conclusions.

And don't fall into the trap of thinking that it is your employer's job to train you. This is *your* career; you have to take responsibility for it. It is your job to learn. It is your job to figure out what you should be learning.

If you are lucky enough to work for a company that will buy you books and send you to conferences and training classes, then take full advantage of that. If not, then pay for those books, conferences, and courses yourself.

And plan to spend some time at this. Time every week.

You owe your employer 35 to 40 hours per week. You owe your career another 10 to 20.

That's what a professional does. A professional puts in the time to groom and maintain their career. And that means you should be working 50 to 60 hours per week total. Mostly at work, but a lot at home too.