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Career Research Essay: Software Developer

My name is Patrick Ignaut and I plan to become a Software Developer. There are several contributing factors that lead me to choosing this as my choice of career. My grandfather never wanted a hard life of labor for my father, despite his protests, and so demanded that he not continue the family farm and instead choose a white-collar career path. This would lead my father to Texas and to his position as a regional manager. He would later instill the same idea in me, despite my protests, and demand that I acquire an education. The other factor is a phrase I remember, “Do what you’re good at, and bring what you like along”. Working with software is something that just comes naturally to me and is a profession that I at least somewhat enjoy. I didn’t feel this way for a long time, when I spent my formative years as a drudge trying to discover what I wanted to be and who I was. I despise that person, and from the disposition I became serious that this would be my choice of career in early 2020. From then on, I began to teach myself the ins and outs of Software Development, until I decided to formalize my education at HCC. After checking with multiple job postings requirements, as well as career research sites, I decided that an associate’s of science in computer science would be optimal for achieving my career goal. This goal requires said associate’s of science in computer science to enter at an entry level and a bachelor’s to enter at higher levels, as well as soft skills such as being detail oriented, math skills, strong verbal and written skills, and working well as an individual and on a team. Being someone with ADHD does complicate these ambitions to a degree, however I’ve learned to deal with them and in certain respects I’ve made them an asset to my efforts.

The required personal skills of a software developer revolve around the ability to solve complex theoretical problems involved in long term plans. According to the Multiple Intelligences Assessment (MultipleIntelligences) my preference of taking in information from others to mull over and discuss later can be utilized in the long-term planning processes of the Plan and Design phases of AGILE methodology (AGILE). This can be combined with the recommendation to work on the computer (MultipleIntelligences). As the Human Metrics Assessment points out that I prefer “Thinking over Feeling (47%)” (HumanMetrics L3) explaining why I have an easier time understanding and working with logic-based systems. The VARK Questionnaire (VARK) results have me listed as “Strong Kinesthetic” (Kinesthetic) which entails the use of charts, diagrams, displays, examples, trial and error. This is something that I can use, not only in the schooling phase of my software developer career, but also to remember and study what I’ve created, or helped create, in my own words and pictures.

There is a difference between the median national pay for a software developer and the Houston specific median pay of $7,619(Handbook) in favor of the national pay, however both are at least an average of $115,000 annual salary (CareerOneStop). The national outlook for the 2022-32 period is a growth of 25% (Handbook) and the growth for the same period in specifically Houston is 24% (CareerOneStop) and recorded as having a 38% increase locally (RealityCheck). The responsibilities of a software developer are to analyze information to determine, recommend, and plan the installation of a new system, or modify an existing system software, then to confer with analysts and engineers to execute said information to the customer’s expectations (CareerOneStop). The education level expected of a software developer can include those with an associate’s degree, and more so a master’s degree, but a bachelor’s degree is primarily the requisite both locally and nationally (Handbook) (CareerOneStop). Financing this goal for me is being done by utilizing the Hazelwood Act, Montgomery GI Bill (Hazlewood), and FAFSA for the associate’s portion of my education, while the bachelor’s may use the FAFSA if applicable, but will need to be assisted by scholarships, work-study programs, company assistance, and my own funds. This education goal is usually accompanied by hard skills such as knowledge of multiple programming languages, application programming interfaces, computer science, and the main methodologies of CI/CD, Agile, or Scrum (Handbook) (CareerOneStop). Some of the soft skills that are generally looked for in this role are problem solving, troubleshooting, innovative thinking, planning, communications, and management.

To maintain the lifestyle that I aspire to I would have to earn at minimum $2,537 per month, or $30,444 a year (RealityCheck). This number will balloon to $40,000 when reserve funds for emergencies are considered. The salary for an entry level position in the career I am pursuing is from $60,000 to $70,000 per year locally, which after taxes should leave me with around $48,000 to $55,000 to handle the expenses of daily living. At the higher-level position where my career will ideally be the salary is $100,000 (GlassDoor) or higher which after taxes should afford me approximately an additional $30,000 to use for my lifestyle. The excess income that I obtain will be kept primarily in savings for emergencies except for the possibility of opening a business if I learn what I want to from my career goal. This lifestyle is quite frugal with little concern for extravagance, which is something that I have become accustomed to over the years. I don’t eat out often, I rarely purchase new games, clothes, electronics, and I prefer to do things myself rather than pay someone else to do it for me. It’s possible that this number may increase if I chose to expand my current style of living to accommodate someone with whom I want to share my life. Even though my career goal will be more than sufficient to live the lifestyle I seek to have, I am not personally satisfied with remaining so stagnant. I plan to take action every two to three years of employment by looking for a new position for vertical movement, as well as expanding my list of technical and transferable skills for lateral movement in the workplace.

I currently reside in Houston, Texas. If I were move to Newark, New Jersey then my likely entry level salary of $70,000 locally per year would need to inflate $92,454 per year to be commensurate (CNN). My required cost of living expenses in Texas is $30,444 (RealityCheck), whereas in New Jersey I need $39,623 annually to meet the same goal. I would see a 12% rise in the cost of groceries, an 82% rise in the cost of housing being the largest difference, a 7% rise in the cost of utilities, a 17% rise in the cost of transport, and a 2% drop in the cost of health care (CNN). If I were to live in Amarillo, Texas my likely entry level salary of $70,000 locally per year would only need to be $62,842 in order to be commensurate. My required cost of living expenses in Houston is $30,444, whereas in Amarillo I would only need $26,932 to meet the same goal. I would see a 1% reduction in the cost of groceries, a 17% reduction the cost of housing being the largest difference, an 8% reduction in the cost of utilities, a 14% reduction in the cost of transportation, and a 12% reduction in the cost of healthcare (CNN). Housing is the most significant factor for me since I already have a paid off house in Texas and would need to either purchase or put a down payment on a house in either city. Amarillo would be the city that is the easiest in terms of the cost of moving considering its proximity to my house in Houston and the overall reduction in the cost of living. My career of a software developer has been for the longest time tied to locations in larger cities, primarily cities with large tech firms, IT departments, etc. In the most recent years, however, this position has been increasingly available as a remote position, allowing employees to live where they wish in relation to the business’ location. A large amount of the jobs offered by employers are also classified as either “on-site” or “hybrid” positions requiring the employee to reside in a location where they can arrive at the place of business within a reasonable timeframe (WorkStyle). In conclusion, Amarillo is a safer option for me as a city of choice and would be my choice of city to live in if I ever decided to depart from my home in Houston. New Jersey has an increase in most of its categories when it comes to the cost of living and was mainly being considered because of my non-immediate family that lives there.

One of the two places that I could possibly volunteer for in the future would be at H.O.P.E Haven as a volunteer administrative assistant. The duties of an administrative assistant are to provide administrative support and ensure the efficiency of operations in an office by answering phones, adding messages to people’s planners, and the organization of individual tasks (AdminAssist). Some of the skills attainable as an administrative assistant that are relevant to my career as a software developer are writing skills, Microsoft Office knowledge, organization, information analysis, problem solving, verbal communication, and managing processes. An administrative assistant is a key part of every office environment, which is exactly the type of environment that a software developer works in and the profession that I will have a great deal of interaction with during my career. This volunteer work may only lead to a job in a company I wish to work for as another administrative assistant, but that increases the likelihood of hiring to the role I want to be in after proving to the company of not only the soft skills that I have built through this volunteer work, but also the trust of being a good employee. The other place I could volunteer at is Vantage Hospice as a clerical assistant. The duties of a clerical assistant are to type documents, take messages, sort and send bills, use office equipment and assist in the efficiency of a company’s office. The relevant skills of a clerical assistant are to have good problem-solving capabilities, competency with computers, strong verbal and written communication and an overall professional demeanor (ClericalAssist). Being both a good problem solver and having competency with computers are the most necessary skills for a software developer, and having strong verbal and written communication skills with a professional demeanor are a basic need for any career. Both volunteer roles are in an office environment, which will be an ever-present ordeal throughout my career and the fellow volunteers at these positions are likely to be either the same people that I will look forward to working with, or the type of people that I will be closely working alongside. I was most interested in these roles because of their close association with my chosen career and there being a need for someone with these skills when most individuals can’t afford the high costs. Automation is already widespread in every facet of the workforce, as well as software, and these two innovations are only going to become more present as technology progresses, which will necessitate my skills where people need them most.

In conclusion, my long-term career goal is to become a software developer. My first specific minor goal to reach that goal is to acquire my associate’s of science in computer science. My second minor goal is to enter the workforce as an entry level software developer, which is attainable with a associates degree though a bachelors is even better. My third minor goal is to work until I have enough money to afford to pursue my bachelor’s degree in computer science, which will also allow me to gain the necessary two years’ experience required to become a junior software developer. The bachelor’s degree is very dependent on the position I am in, both financially and occupationally. If the employed position’s pay is too low, I might have to focus on my work and attempt lateral, and maybe vertical, movement before I can return to school. If the position’s pay is too high, it usually entails a larger workload that will keep me preoccupied as well as the impulse to acquire wealth while I can. Once I have made my decision, possibly achieved my four-year bachelor's degree, and have accumulated a minimum of five years' experience, I will have met the requisites needed to leave junior status and be considered a full-fledged software developer. Achieving this is the end goal for my career in the workforce due to the incredible level of lateral movement permitted in this career. I, however, have ambitions of ceasing working in the workforce in favor of running my own business to add to the workforce options. In ten years, I will be the one giving the orders in my life and will relish in testing myself to see if every feeling I’ve ever had against some of my former employers are just part of the job of being the boss, or if I have really learned from those experiences and can make a difference. I will be my happiest when the people around me are happy and just don’t need to worry as much about their future’s as well as mine.

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