

CSU33012 – Biography of a Software Engineer

“The biggest risk is not taking any risk. In a world that’s changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks.”- Mark Zuckerberg. Zuckerberg has always been a very influential person in my life. He is a very hard-working person and one of the best software engineers in the world. His works have always motivated me to take risks and always give back to the community. So, there was never a doubt in my mind that Mark Zuckerberg is the person I will be writing about in this assignment when it was announced.

Introduction:

Mark Zuckerberg was born on 14th May 1984 in White Plains, New York. His father Edward Zuckerberg is a dentist and his mother Karen Zuckerberg a psychiatrist. He is the second of the four children (Himself and three sisters). He and his sisters Randi, Donna and Arielle were raised in Dobbs Ferry, New York. He attended his high school at Ardsley High School before he transferred to Phillips Exeter Academy in his junior year. He was an excellent student and won many prizes in Mathematics, Astronomy, Science and classical studies. He also attended the Johns Hopkins University’s Centre for Talented Youth for summer camp and was fluent in Ancient Greek, French, Hebrew and Latin.

Early programming:

His first programming experience was when his father Edward Zuckerberg taught him Atari BASIC when he was 11 years old and then a David Newman, a software engineer was hired to give young Zuckerberg private lessons. At 13 years of age, with his knowledge of Atari Basic, he created a computer network called ‘Zucknet’ which allowed computers in his home to communicate with computers at his father’s office to communicate with each other via a ping. ‘Zucknet’ is considered to be a precursor of AOL’s Instant Messenger. While at high school, he worked at a company called Intelligent Media Group to build a music player called the Synapse Media

player which used machine learning to recommend the user other music based on their listening habits.

Time at Harvard:

After graduating from Exeter Academy in 2002 he enrolled in Harvard where he studied psychology major and computer science. He already achieved a “reputation as a programming prodigy” by the time he started classes at Harvard.

In his sophomore year, Zuckerberg wrote a software called ‘CourseMatch’ which allowed students to make class selection decisions based on the selections of other users. He also created a website called ‘Facemash’ which compared pictures of two students and allowed the students to vote on the most attractive. The site became very popular in a very short period of time but was later taken down by the college when its popularity stalled the network at Harvard and was deemed inappropriate. Zuckerberg later had to apologise publicly.

Before he dropped out of Harvard in in sophomore year, in January of 2004, Zuckerberg started writing the code for his website “TheFacebook” and launched it on 4th February 2004 with an intention to create a service limited only to Harvard in which students can enter their own information and photos into a template. Within two weeks, half of the students have signed up. Later with the help of his roommates he made this site available to other schools across the country.

Facebook:

By virtue of the success of “TheFacebook”, Zuckerberg dropped out of Harvard and along with his roommates Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes moved their headquarters to Palo Alto, California to concentrate full on his project.

By mid 2004, they found several investors and by the end of the year reached 1 million users. In May 2005, Facebook received a major boost when capital firm Accel Partners invested \$12.7 million into facebook with

the help of which Facebook which was restricted to ivy schools was open to registration for other high school and international school students. By 2006, Facebook was open to registration for anyone with an email address.

Philanthropy:

Zuckerberg has funded his fortunes for a variety of causes. In September 2010, he donated \$100 million to Newark Public Schools to save the falling public school system in Newark, New Jersey. Then in December of 2010 he signed “The Giving Pledge” along with Bill Gates and Warren Buffett which stated he would donate half of his wealth to charity over a course of time.

Marriage and Personal life:

During the sophomore year at Harvard, Zuckerberg met Priscilla Chan a medical student. After being living together for two years the couple got married on May 19, 2012. Zuckerberg has two daughters Max, born on November 30, 2015, and August, born on August 28, 2017. Chan currently is a pediatrician and a philanthropist.

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