As difficult as the 12-week curriculum was, it doesn’t compare to the job search process afterwards. What makes finding a job so difficult is due to a myriad of factors; network, connections, previous experiences, education, technical skill level, social skill level, company tech stack, there are just too many to name! In this section, I will dive into my personal experience throughout the job search.

Job Readiness:

One of the biggest questions I get when people ask me about the bootcamp is whether or not I feel prepared for a job coming out of it. Quite honestly, my answer has been yes and no. First off, I would like to emphasize that App Academy’s curriculum is second to none and I learned about as much as I possibly could in the short span of three months. With that being said, the web development world has changed and with these changes comes a different interview experience from that of my colleagues in previous cohorts. With how hot the Bay Area is for tech, it has become a migration hub for all aspiring software engineers. And due to the saturation of this market, companies are looking for ways to filter out the best of the best through advanced technical screens and thorough interview processes. Basically, we are tested in areas deeper than we have been exposed to. Based on my bad interviews, I have been in situations where I had no clue how to tackle a problem and this is usually because it is such a specific problem that I was just never exposed to the concept.

So why do I answer yes as well as no? It’s really simple. App Academy provides students with the necessary foundation for learning because we are exposed to almost all facets of web development. The idea is for us to touch on the subject matter during the course and to strengthen those skills as we progress through our careers. I can confidently say that the change in my skill level from the day I finished the bootcamp and three months later is monumental. Not only did I look back at the curriculum to patch up holes but I now had the time to dive deeper into areas that I wanted to strengthen via external resources and solo projects. I also wanted to mention that with each technical interview I did poorly in, I definitely took the time to break down what I did wrong and how I could have improved. The skills learned from this specific situation definitely sticks with me tightly. Learn from your mistakes? Or maybe I’m just salty. Anyways, what I’m really trying to stress is the idea that I came out of the program with a lot of knowledge but I consistently fell a bit short in passing my interviews and each time I failed, I advanced my skills by getting a better understanding of the areas that I needed more work.

Networking:

Think of a what it’s like to be a recruiter for a second (props to Arthur Chen). Your job is to find the right person for an opening. Now think about how many developers are situated in the Bay Area and imagine endlessly going through resumes to find potential candidates. It’s like finding a needle in a haystack! And what I’m trying to emphasize is not how shitty of a situation this is for the recruiter but rather how difficulty it can be for the applicants on the other end. This is what makes networking such a powerful tool. The idea is simple:

1. Make connections through meetups/social gatherings
2. Reach out to connections when you see a job opening
3. Express your interest, chit-chat, you know…the whole shebang
4. Resume bumped to the very top of the tall stack of resumes for consideration

But at the same time, I decided to reach out to my network only after I got my feet a bit wet. I didn’t want to blow all my connections at first and wanted to wait a bit until I truly felt prepared. This is the case for me only; some people are definitely much more ready and confident right off the bat.

Motivation:

Probably the biggest factor not listed above is self-motivation. Having to do phone screens that lead to technical interviews which lead to more technical interviews which ultimately lead to onsite interviews only to get rejected and needing to start over is a DRAINING process. Not only can it be physically tiring but the mental impact is a bigger enigma for an individual.

I can say that my worst week probably came about two months into the job hunt. This was definitely the most promising week for me in terms of interviews and potential. I had six technical interviews with large companies scheduled. Nail any of them and I get to the final round onsite which, to be honest, I was actually more confident in because of the social atmosphere it presents, but that’s another story. Anyways, I scattered these interviews with Airbnb, Cisco Meraki, CourseHero, IXL Learning, etc. throughout the week and was excited to have such an opportunity. Fast forward through the week…bombed all of them. Did not get to the next round for a single one. This was the lowest point for me. I started questioning my own abilities and contemplating whether this was meant for me.

But I remembered what my peers at App Academy had mentioned to me time and time again: keep pushing through because it will be worth it one day. It sounds corny and cheesy but it is absolutely true. It’s a marathon, not a sprint (as my homie Kenton says, although in much different context). The job search is a process that requires consistent learning of new material and because I had something to take away from each of those failed interviews, I knew how to improve myself. So after I took the weekend to shake off my emotional self and recharge, I got right back to work the next week. To all current job hunters out there, job hunting can be a long and draining process but just keep your eyes on the end goal and keep pushing yourself. The feeling at the end of the tunnel is so much sweeter knowing that you gave it your all to get there.