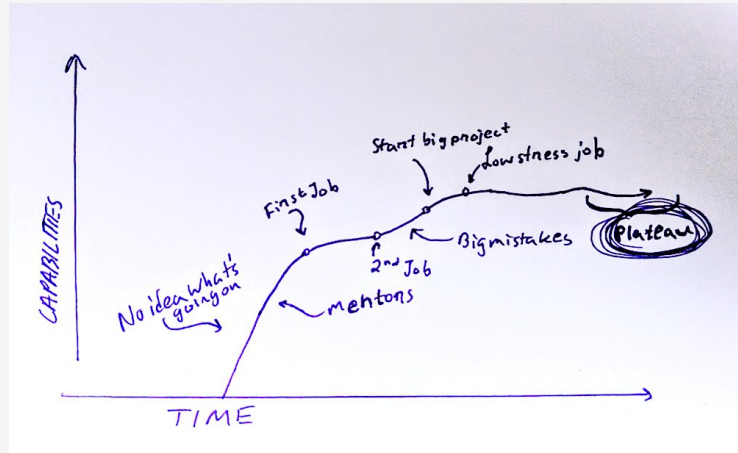Cole Lawrence

Improvement Rut *Jan 13, 2019*

Do you miss a former version of yourself?

Collecting moss

Over the last several months, I've found my appetite limited to the low hanging fruit. I've seldom had the itch to climb unknown trees. Hell, even at work, I've passed up learning more meaningful things to maintain a diet of "honing my craft".

I have dreams of leading incredible people to address interesting problems, but I've hardly made this known to my peers.

I have ambitions to speak at conferences **and write** for the masses, but I don't think I have a specific subject to preach.

I want to host more friends at my apartment, but I don't know what to entertain them with. Any little bit of discomfort has dissuaded me from pursuit of new and high value things.

Illusion of "keeping up"

I skim /r/programming daily for new ideas and share some of those ideas with colleagues. Yet, I hardly recall what I learned from that research or those discussions with each passing day. At one point in time, I felt like I was being exposed to many new topics everyday, and I could feel excited to learn from ferd.ca's Zen of Erlang, Scott Wlaschin's Funcional Design Patterns, or the introduction of new paradigms like Kitten's take on concatenative programming or ReactiveX map reducing tutorial. I also used to follow TypeScript's changelog religiously. I have always been interested in language design, and the reasoning for each languages' new features. I think I have a healthy index across most programming topics, but I'm not learning (or applying) as much as I used to.

Now, I mostly program in Rust for fun, like this undocumented toy database for relational programming languages (opimized for dynamicland's RealTalk). For talk-protocol, I read through *The Little*

Schemer and began researching many publications by Alan Kay and the Xerox PARC members to find inspiration. It's mostly steady development in my free time at this point.

I feel like passion is dwindling in my life. My consulting work has predictable delivery and a consistent velocity. I work an average of 40 hours per week, where I used to be excited working 60-70 hour work weeks. I feel less passion present around me in my day-to-day. Where is the old all-nighter spirit?

/r/programming recently discussed the article "Competing with a 'Stanford grad just dying to work all nighters on Red Bull'"; *is it wrong for me to be a little envious of that spirit?* During my day I find my *cautionary experience* silences *uncharted ambitions* in my choices; my Rust pet project is completely within my comfort zone at this point, yet I work on it rather than practicing for or taking opportunities to follow my "dreams".

I've long had an ambition to become a better writer. Prior to this entry, there were only a couple visible posts from October 2017 which talked about how I was going to write more and become more like my role model, Scott Wlaschin. And, here we are! Post number three.

Get rolling

I'm covered in moss which cakes my perception of progress. To the people around me I'm estimating and producing within my means, and yet I am looking in new directions every week—talking up some interesting language like Rust or Elixir, some type system feature like Effects, or a new pattern of state management like the Repository pattern or Flutter's BLoC pattern. I'm proud of where I am now. I'm consistently meeting our team's deadlines more than ever with a healthy under promising and over delivering mindset. "Predictability and dependability" have been hard skills to acquire in my career.

I must also say aside from this fear of settling down, I am very happy. I work with fun people and my social life is growing steadily in New York. I feel completely capable of any goal, yet I become distracted by learning fun stuff in rust like procedural macros.

Environment

If anyone came to me with this issue, the first thing I'd say would be to evaluate your environment. Who are you surrounded by? What media do you consume? The first advice I give to people learning to program is to learn by book, have a project to apply to, and to watch the nerdiest conference recordings on programming. I want everyone to feel the kind of love and care that can exist in the art of programming. The best way I've found to feel that is through the people who love it. For many years, recorded lectures have driven my passion for programming. For example, Josè Valim's or Chris McCord's talks on Elixir or Phoenix, Rich Hickey's talks on Clojure, or Scott Wlaschin's talks on functional programming.

If I take my own advice, I think my first course of action will be involving myself more in the programming communities here in NYC. It seems crazy to me that I have not been to the Recurse center, or been to a

hackathon in the area, yet. Why am I not out and about as I had been while in Springfield, MO between 2015 and 2017?

I'm curious to hear if you've experienced this problem, and how you came to realize it was a problem.

Shared with [/r/programming](#).