Why Coding?, Why Now?

I have always had an interest in web-development and began to scratch the surface with each of the positions I have held during the last 10 years. At the end of 2016, I decided to enroll in the Bloc “Web Developer Track” and have not looked back.

My decision to enroll stemmed from my desire to take my design knowledge to the next level. I had been designing web interfaces with Photoshop and was passing those designs to a web-developer. After seeing my designs being turned into a fully functioning website, I started wondering how I could skip the hand-off process and create them myself. I began looking into the skills required and the more I looked into it, the more interesting it all seemed.

And so began my web-design career. After checking out a few options, I decided Bloc was the way to go, as I was able to continue with my day job but spend my evenings learning all of the new skills required to set me up with my dream job. I had some basic HTML knowledge already but was ready to dive in and play around with some CSS.

I soon discovered many new coding languages which would eventually become second nature to me, and after only a few short weeks, I was diving in and building applications such as a digital music player in the vein of Spotify.

At this point I was beyond just making a site “look nice,” I was able to have it function any way I wanted with formulas, loops, modals, and anything else I had been unfamiliar with just a couple of months ago.

It is a journey where I find myself continually learning with great enjoyment as I discover what is possible in the field of web-development.   
  
Reaching for Kyu

Anyone who is in the process of learning to code or simply sharpen their skills is likely to have come across <a href=https://www.codewars.com> codewars</a> at some point. For me it was no different, I soon found myself taking on the challenges and pushing myself to see how I could solve each Kata. It was daunting at first but after successfully passing the initial test challenges I was on my way to pushing my rank up.

One of the most challenging parts of the kata can simply come down to understanding the task description. Although this can be frustrating, it actually ends up being a good glimpse into the real world of coding and understanding the brief. Once I was able to get stuck into the challenge I would soon find myself adjusting my code through trial and error as I aimed to pass each of the test requirements.

Once I had my code completed and passing all tests it has always been interesting to see how others would tackle the same problem. Seeing results of 1 or 2 lines of code when I had solved the problem with 8 lines was disheartening at first but you soon come to realise that those two line may not be the best solution when you are trying to write code in a way that is also easy for others to understand what you are doing.

Codewars has and will continue to be a great way for me to hone my skills as a developer and adapt to new ways of problem solving.  
  
Breaking the Language Barrier

As I jumped into coding, I soon discovered that learning all of the coding languages was surprisingly enough like learning a new spoken language. All of the similarities are there: you begin by watching and reading a few tutorials, followed by picking up some key phrases and trying them out. It is not until you begin to fully immerse yourself and let go of any fear that you start to finally grasp the language.

In 2007 I had the opportunity to move to Spain for a new job. Although I had no experience with the Spanish language, it was an opportunity I could not pass on. My first step towards learning Spanish was to enroll in a class with fellow recent transplants from around the world. During the day I would listen to work colleagues and try to pick up and understand what I could. This then gave me the confidence to try out what I had learned with my Spanish friends, and before long I was having full conversations in Spanish.

It has been a similar experience with learning coding languages. After enrolling at Bloc and beginning with some tutorials, it was not long before I was practicing writing a few lines of code. Then, with more practice, my confidence grew and I was soon creating full websites from scratch.

As with learning a spoken language, the best way to enhance my language skills with coding has been to practice and speak to others who also have a knowledge of the language, pushing me one step closer to fluency.