Dear Sir or Madam   01/01/11

I'm writing to you regarding the vacancy in the Software Developer role at Guardian Media Group. For the last 12 months since coming to the end of my MSc in Internet Systems and E-business I have been building my web development skills both professionally and in my own projects. On an Engineers Without Borders placement in Pune, India, over the summer of 2010 I worked with another volunteer building a data display and entry site from scratch in PHP, and in the process learnt a great deal about the Codeigniter framework. I also learnt about the particular challenges in writing production quality code which are less frequently faced at university. Subsequent to this, I took up a position as a junior RoR developer at Spoonfed media in London working on their new Bullseye events marketing platform. An ambitious and wide ranging application that built in everything from Facebook App development to event publishing scripts, and from API integrations to text in and out services. Though my area of development was primarily in the event publishing app I gained some experience in many of these technologies. All the while I worked in an Agile environment with daily scrums, pair programming as a standard beginning to projects and a tight development cycle of weekly releases accompanied by strict unit testing with a BDD philosophy.

As for my own projects these have included freelance work on an artists website and custom micro CMS (live but awaiting instructions from the client) and further work for the organisation I worked with in India (live). Recently from where I'm currently living in Tegucigalpa Honduras (after spending the last 5 weeks studying Spanish and travelling) I have begun work on a Rails project with a friend in the UK and as this currently limited to one or two days a week due to his work commitments, I am deciding between work on a plugin for the Ushahidi platform or learning web development with a Spring MVC/Hibernate/MySQL/Maven stack.

Reading about the Guardian's use of such a stack and recent change to Scala is obviously part of the reason for this choice. Currently I am working through tutorials and books and feel this is something that I can pick up quickly. If offered an interview I would be sure to gain more experience in this and its similarities and its differences from environments I am more used to. If offered a job I would be happy to spend my remaining time in Honduras getting up to speed with whatever aspects of the framework and development process are likely to prove most useful.

I went into software development from a Humanities and Economics background as I realised its power both in the profit and not for profit sector to have an impact on the things I care about. To provide information and build communities of like-minded people, as well as introduce people to different ideas. For this reason, and as a regular reader and user of the site, I am passionate about businesses like the Guardian and feel like appropriate use of new technologies can transform the way people consume media in the UK and in the world. I know the Guardian's track record with this – it has been the source of information for many of the things I am now most interested in (for instance, I heard about the Ushahidi platform early on from the Guardian site) - and it is for this reason I would be so excited to work there.

I am available to interview via Skype until the 16th of August and in London after this point. Code samples and site links are available on request (a public github repository will also go live in the next few weeks).

I hope you will consider me for this position. Yours faithfully,

Jacob Ashdown

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Currently based in Tegucigalpa Honduras. Available to work August 17th.

Qualifications:

Postgraduate:
- Durham University: MSc Internet systems and E-business

Undergraduate:
- Durham University: BA Hons Politics Philosophy and Economics (2:1).

Skills:
- **Software engineering** – Since the start of my masters I have accumulated 6 months experience in **Java** and **Java remoting** for academic projects. The following six months up to October 2010 were spent building academic **Ruby on Rails** projects included a dissertation involving search technologies (**Ferret** in this case – based on the Java Lucene project and similar, though less developed than, **Solr**), academic PHP projects (including a **semantic search** and **web crawling** project) and working for three months over the summer for Engineers Without Borders on a **PHP** based slum data collection and handling project in Pune India. From November 2010 until May 2011 I worked for Spoonfed Media as a junior **Rails** developer on their Bullseye platform (a subscription based event marketing tool) and continued some work related to the EWB project in my spare time. Shelter was an agile development environment using **Git for version control**, **Assembla** for **ticketing**, **Rspec** (among other technologies) for **BDD unit testing**, daily **scrums and pair programming**. We deployed to Amazon **EC2 Linux** images and over my time there and subsequently (having switched to **Linux** as my primary OS) I gained substantial experience in these techniques and technologies. From May until June I travelled and studied Spanish in Central America but am now based in Tegucigalpa Honduras. I have just finished the (hopefully!) final prototype iteration of a Freelance **PHP** project – an Art website with custom Micro CMS. Built with **Codeigniter** and **Doctrine**. I am now beginning work on a plugin for **Ushahidi** to build on some intelligent automatic report verifying and Wikipedia style editing aspects and have an ongoing **Rails** project with a friend in the UK.
- **GIS** – A large part of the work of the EWB partner organisation's work in India involves GIS and so this was a skill gained to understand the organisation.
- **Statistics and data analysis** - As a result of modules on Econometrics I have a good understanding of and skill in statistics. I am able to use advanced statistical techniques such as regression analysis. I have used both Excel and Access extensively in performing data and accounts analysis.
- **Research and analysis** - The last four years in academia and my research experience as a policy intern with the Liberal Democrats mean I am experienced in lifting relevant data and ideas from sources such as academic journals and texts. I am able to present this information clearly and succinctly and am proficient in its analysis.
- **Business planning and proposal writing** – I have experience in producing properly researched and costed business plans for the e-business side of my MSc and have studied business and project management techniques in this

setting. While in India I produced analyses of project proposals and have written standard form log frames.
- **Spanish –** Having travelled and lived in an overwhelmingly Spanish speaking region for 7 weeks now, and having completed 2 weeks of Spanish immersion courses (5 speaking and 3 hours of homework a day) in that time, I consider myself at a good level given this experience and expect to improve greatly over the next 6-7 weeks (including undertaking one more week of immersion).

Experience:
- **Team experience** - Last year I led a team of 5 international postgraduates while we produced an in depth business plan. In India I worked with another volunteer in a largely self supervised effort to produce two linked applications from scratch. I learnt a lot about managing dependencies and the necessity of agreed good practice in writing code. This led me to hugely appreciate the agile project management techniques we employed at Spoonfed.
- **Self reliance** - I planned and made an overland trip from the UK to China and back on a Gap year in 2006. I have completed comprehensive literature reviews of issues in social policy as an intern at the Liberal Democrat's policy office. I have taken on my own projects in order to learn more about technologies and techniques I'm interested in.
- **Organisational and managerial roles** – Most recently I managed a team of three at Spoonfed in the manual work associated with the part of the application I was lead developer on (event broadcasting). Over the last 9 months I have been the placement manager planning the continuation of my EWB placement and finding, interviewing and selecting the next volunteers.

Character and attitude:
- **Learning and overcoming challenges** - I am a quick and self sufficient learner both in terms of advancing my existing skills and in picking up new ones. A demonstration of this is my continued interest in both of my university subjects (particularly in my own projects) and that I am currently learning Spanish primarily by immersion.
- **Leadership** - My emergence as an informal group leader in many situations (outside of paid management experience) has come partly because I am quick to understand and quick to be able to explain. Having studied philosophy I am a clear and structured thinker – a useful skill in such situations.
- **Communication and teamwork** – My MSc was predominantly international students who did not speak English as a first language. Frequent group work situations here meant I became a proficient communicator. My work in India and time learning Spanish now have involved overcoming communication challenges both professionally and day to day.

Job History:
- Freelance and own projects – (Mar 2011 – Aug 2011). These include an artists homepage with simple custom CMS (PHP), A collaborative project on knowledge mapping with flash/html canvas and Ruby on Rails and a Human Rights/Corruption reporting project for Honduras using Ushahidi and SMS reporting. Ask for code samples, soon to be available in a Github repository.
- Spoonfed Media – Bullseyehub junior developer RoR (Nov 2010 – May 2011).
- Engineers Without Borders web placement volunteer, Shelter Associates (Jun – Sep 2010)
- Internship - Liberal Democrat Policy and Research office (2008)
- Management of archives, data entry - Barcan Woodward solicitors (2007-2009).
- Call centre worker –Yellow Pages (2005-6)