

title: **SWE Exits for ADHD (A few ideas)**

num\_comments: 6

num\_up\_votes: 45

upvote\_ratio: 1.0

#### #### Post Text ####

Hey All, As somebody diagnosed ~6mo ago, I've picked up a fair bit more awareness as to what I do/do not enjoy, am naturally good at, as well as the career options out there. I've seen a few posts relating to careers, skill sets, etc. Thought I would chip in, having had some fairly broad (Albeit not many years), experience, wearing many hats. I'm a solution architect in a team that has grown 10x in the three years I've been there. My boss is also ADHD I'm sure (He may not know it :)). If I were to quickly highlight some traits related to work and their impact (Many more, top of my head...):

**Negatives:**

- Easily Bored (Often struggle to sit down and program for a whole day. Constantly jumping to the next thing. Will go nuts doing repetitive work)
- Poor attention to detail (Code is more likely to be buggy, take shortcuts. My emails are notoriously direct, not proof read)
- Irritable (Angered easily, particularly by politics, always feel like I should rage quit my job, struggle dealing with underperformers, noise/touch/interruption sensitivity, etc)

**Positives:**

- Very happy with friction, uncertainty (Very key in growing teams, complex work, startups)
- Passionate (Knack for leadership and driving teams towards a goal)
- Creative and forward thinking (Naturally inclined to think about revamping, improving processes, new products, ideas, etc).
- "Making Waves" - This is a double edged sword. My style is very much in leaving a place with more work than when I arrived, through new ideas, which inevitably fall to me/my team for implementation. My responsibility, if not managed effectively, always seems to grow at a crazy fast rate. This is great for progression and innovation, but I am always taking on more than I am capable of. I often work crazy hours to execute on an idea that I am passionate about, having proposed the unrealistic timelines myself, lol.

**Tech Roles!** If I were to highlight some rough tracks, in SWE, this is how I believe many ADHD'ers would fit/not fit as well.

**Developer:** - I know that personally, though I might know the best way to implement something at a high level, based on fairly obsessive reading on software, I am not the best person to implement it. I will take an idea, hack it together over 24 hours, pitch it to a client the next day, and it will work. I'm not the guy to take JIRA tickets in isolation, and build a beautiful product. Though I've tried to fit myself into this mould, I now understand it's something I will never be able to properly execute. This is fine.

**Product Owners:** - Given the positives in this list (Friction of multiple stakeholder, Passion and vision), I have considered heavily moving into product management. The issue for me here though, is product owners are such a process based, administrative role. I suppose you could farm off a lot of this to a BA, but realistically, with ADHD, you likely won't want to be responsible for documentation, fairly obscure compliance issues, and overall "governance". I know for me, I would shit off devs to no end, as I need more skin in the game. Try and be responsible for something but also not being given implementation on the "how" - I would go mental, as would lead devs.

**Solution Architect:** - This role is in working with organisations to use a product created by dev teams (see above), most effectively. Think of google SA's working with organisations to implement translation services at scale, AWS working with a company to most effectively move to cloud. This role can be very creative and technical, and is typically very flexible in scope. It's inevitably people oriented, big picture, and you are generally not responsible for large amounts of management, process, or implementation. I've found this to be a natural fit with ADHD, and am really enjoying it.

**Presales/Sales:** - Presales, or generally sales roles, generally involve managing relationships, thinking of creative implementation methods (In more technical roles), and pitching larger scale, fairly interesting solutions. I struggle at times with the politics of it all, and at times the attention to detail and the associated fluff in this role. I have less experience here, but think it may fit some ADHD guys well (Less so myself).

**Startup Founder / Early Employee / High growth technical team:** - **Working in an emerging company / team is going to involve wearing many hats**, largely involving the roles above. Variety, new information and experiences, and friction, are a place most of those with ADHD have a large competitive advantage. The roles I have enjoyed most, and performed best in, all fit along these lines.

My \$.02 - Enjoy your break!

#### #### Comments ####

##### Commenter\_2

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 5

I appreciate your post. I was in a similar boat and started my own IT consulting business with a focus on Solution Architecture which then requires Business Analysts, Development, and Project Management. My focus was an Enterprise CRM which then led to many other paths. Keeping busy and learning new tech and techniques has helped me be both a generalist and a specialist, but not in a Jack of all trades master of none way. The key was to find actual specialists for roles I truly was not the best fit for [like graphic design or SEO]. The imposter syndrome I still struggle with is ridiculous, but I focus on my core strengths and allow specialists to work their magic. It is not even close to 100% perfect, but do not be afraid to replace someone if they are not going to work out. I had to fire someone on their first day because it was obvious he had lied during the interview and overstated their skills, like literally "how do I open PowerShell" even though he said he "automates everything everyday with PowerShell". If I pay specialist rates, you should damn well be a specialist.

Edit: typos. My candidate testing procedures have improved, but one has to assume some basic things in IT and not test for them: ever use Word? What does this CSS selector do? Add e plus 1 in hex, what is the value? What is the color black in hex code for CSS? Shoot, sometimes you have to make a leap of faith. I now offer basic training on what Devs and Sys Admins want to learn that align with necessary requirements.

##### Commenter\_3

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 5

Hey, thanks a lot for your post, really appreciated!

I'm currently also unsure, if I want to continue my work as a SWE, or start looking for another job. I just stumbled over a rant in r/cscareerquestions, and hoped there would be a SWE perspective from an ADHD programmer as well, to know, if there are others with similar thoughts/issues.. And there you are, writing this post!! :)

I currently work in a mid sized IT service provider company, with only loose role allocations and only an "invisible" hierarchy. I find it pretty hard actually with these buzz-word terms, as so much is kind of implicitly handled. Thus, I need more energy to organize myself in this type of company/projects. Additionally, it makes it hard to work in a company with only AAA software engineers (I'm not bad at all either, but most of my colleagues are just a whole other league) which are super-duper independently working. (yeah, of course no understanding for ADHD type people there, as these people are all 'farmers' on steroids.. So my 'boss' pretty directly tells me frequently, that I am not good enough.) Needlessly, the software (big business applications (CRM)) we're writing, is very complex and pretty slow to develop, so it needs way too much time for me to get to be productive at all. Is that a total no-go zone for somebody with ADHD, what do you guys think?

But, there's somebody which wants probably do a startup with me in a field which interests me a lot, and sees me as a some kind of CIO/project coordinator. In detail, I would first coordinate the development of the outsourced CMS frontpage, and then in a later stage, manage the development of the product behind it. Wouldn't that be pretty much the **"Solution Architect"** and **"Startup Founder / Early Employee / High growth technical team"** **roles combined together?**

I think this startup role could really suit me. Although I also have some concerns, as I'm almost fresh from school (BSc), 1.5 Years work experience) and only have been working as a software engineer with the company's CRM framework. A good point is for sure, that I already had a lot of customer contact..

What do you guys think would be essential skills for a Startup / Solution Architect? I'm kind of overwhelmed to see what would be needed the most.. Also I'm unsure if I'm simply too inexperienced.

##### Commenter\_4

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 3

Interesting post. Commenting to revisit later.

##### Commenter\_5

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Awesome post.. Resonates with me

##### Commenter\_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Your post offer good clues for folks with adhd like myself. I cane to somewhat similar solutions.

##### Unknown\_User

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

As someone who just started to learn, you have already written that page in my book. So I'll just flip to the next big thing, like always. XD