Student Opportunity Lab:

Exploring Careers Outside of Development

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## ABSTRACT

Are you a computer science major interested in exploring careers outside the software developer track? There are many roles that require you to understand software and coding without necessarily writing code every day. Learn about how you can make an impact in the business world (marketing, sales, consulting services, customer success) and how to position and prepare yourself for such a role.

# AUDIENCE

This career-related talk is geared towards students and people early in their career who are exploring their career options.

INTRODUCTION

**Dispelling Perception of Non-Technical Roles**

Bringing a product to market requires not only a great product but also a strong team to help carry it from conception to the market.  This is something that you may have heard often, and at surface value it may be something you agree with.  However, I know that there are many misperceptions about these roles. I first want to dispel some myths about non-engineering roles and how a technical individual can add a lot of value:

The pay for engineering roles are much higher than X roles.

* The number 1 career regret according to *Harvard Business Review* is “I wish I hadn’t taken the job for the money” [1]
* There are roles that pay comparably, and proper research and negotiation will help you not leave money on the table.
* Lower initial base salary, but higher ceiling through performance-based pay or faster promotion cycles

X roles lack the prestige of engineering roles.

* Prestige from a top-dog profession is different from respect where people appreciate and admire your work
* Ask yourself if you enjoy the work, not if you’d like to enjoy the work:: “Prestige is like a powerful magnet that warps even your beliefs about what you enjoy. It causes you to work not on what you like, but what you’d like to like” – Paul Graham

I feel like I would be wasting my skills if I don’t go into engineering.

* The world is not binary with engineering v. non-engineering-- there are many cross-functional roles that allow you to use your whole skill set.

I’m not sure if I want to pursue a career in business or engineering.

* Career paths are not linear, and you can always choose to make a career switch if you find that you want to pursue other things.

Ultimately you should do what makes you happy, since that will eventually help you feel the most fulfilled from your work. [2]

**Roles, Responsibilities, and Value Add**

I’ll highlight a variety of roles that one may encounter in the business life cycle, listing the responsibilities, business contribution, and value of having a technical degree. This only scrapes the surface of possible roles, but I just wanted to highlight these as areas where having familiarity with software and coding can be helpful.

Product Strategy and Conception

How do you decide what you want to build?

* Product Manager
  + Cross-functional collaboration with development and go-to-market teams to carry the product through whole life cycle
* Tech Writer
  + Create solid documentation on product to make product easier to use and understand

*Other roles*: Business Analytics,

Sales & Marketing

* Sales Engineer
  + *Responsibility*: Articulate and demo product technology to both business and technical users, and identify all technical issues for prospective customers to ensure a good product fit
* Developer Marketing
  + *Responsibility*: Promote developer programs through marketing campaigns, programs, and events to engage and excite developers
* Corporate Development
  + *Responsibility*: Determine what acquisitions a company should make in order to achieve its goals (ex. technical capability to best integrate into core product)

*Other roles*: Demo Engineer, Digital Marketing, Product Marketing, Business Development

Product Implementation

How do you make sure a customer will be successful and happy with your product?

* Technical Consultant
  + *Responsibility*: Lead technical components of complex product deployments to customers
* Solutions Architect
  + *Responsibility*: Translates customer requirements to an architecture for a solution, and works with the team to execute idea to reality

*Other roles*: Technical Customer Success Manager

OUTCOMES/CONCLUSION

After this session, students will have a broad understanding of a variety of careers that are available to them and how they can make a huge business impact and add value in these different roles.

**PARTICIPATION STATEMENT**

I have made a commitment to attend the Grace Hopper Conference on October 19-21, 2016 if my proposal is accepted.

# BIO

Katie Lee graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a B.S. in Computer Science and Engineering in 2015. She has held a variety of internships that have leveraged her technical abilities in various capacities, such as developer marketing, energy systems modeling, and tech policy research.  She is currently a part of the Rotational Associate Program at Box, where she is currently an Associate Product Manager.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] https://hbr.org/2012/12/the-top-five-career-regrets

[2] http://theweek.com/articles/444815/how-find-fulfilling-work-according-science