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P4 Tech Women: From Hackbright to Perforce

Nov 07, 2014
by Liz Lam, QA Lead Engineer (@p4liz)

This is part of a blog series designed to explore the stories of our Women in Tech at Perforce. It's been fun and inspiring talking to each one of these women. As they share where they've been and how they came to where they are now, it is my hope that others will be encouraged and inspired as well.

Ksenia Burlachenko is our first Hackbright Academy hire. She's been with Perforce for a little over a year. Originally from Siberia, Ksenia was an economics major from the University of Southern California before joining Hackbright. Her loves range from tech and data to economics to film, and everything nerdy in between.

When did you first become interested in tech?

It was when my dad brought home a brand new PC in 1997. Back then, very few homes in Russia had computers so my friends all came over to play games. I didn't do much other than play games we now call classic, but nonetheless, having a computer was awesome and it sprung my passion for the latest and the greatest technology. Within a few years, I decided to upgrade my parents' system to the latest Windows '98. It still surprises me that everything went smoothly, because I am pretty sure we had no backups of any important work documents my Mom had on the computer.

What stopped you from pursuing a career in the tech industry right from the start?

To be honest, it never even occurred to me that I should use my passion for tech to become a software engineer. Even though I really liked tech, I never associated myself with the "nerds." Don't get me wrong, I'm actually a nerd. I just didn't want to see myself as one. I also thought it would be too hard for me to be in an all-male environment and I didn't feel like I was smart enough to be a software engineer. Beside all that, I really enjoyed studying economics and political science. I wanted to be an economist. I still following economics and political situations closely, but I'm happy that I was able to switch careers.

What was your first programming language?

At Hackbright Academy everyone's first programming language is Python. I had no prior programming experience before that.

How would your describe your experience at Hackbright Academy?

I had a great experience at the Hackbright Academy. At first I was skeptical of being in an all-female class, but that quickly disappeared when I got to know my classmates. The program at Hackbright Academy was intense. There were many days when I would come home late and many weekends of constant work. It was probably one of the most challenging things that I've ever done in my life, but it was great and absolutely worth it.

Did you have any mentors before Hackbright?

One of my friends that first sent me some resources on how to get started with learning programming became my mentor throughout Hackbright. He is one of those people that loves to code and to teach. I feel very lucky to know him.

What is your role now at Perforce?

I am a Software Engineer in Test and I work on Git Fusion, a Perforce service that acts as a remote with Perforce in the backend. It basically translates Git history to Perforce history without any changes to Git's workflow.

What language do you code in today?

I code in Perl and Python nowadays, and also do quite a bit of Bash scripting.

What resources would you recommend for people interested in learning how to program?

Code.org, udemy.com, codeschool.com and lynda.com are great online resources. If you are interested in attending a coding bootcamp, Course Report is a great resource for finding schools in your area. Also, check out some relevant answers on how to learn to code or reviews of different coding bootcamps on Quora.

What advice would you give to women getting into the software industry?

Believe in yourself and take on challenges.

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About the author

Liz Lam plays on Team QA at Perforce Software. She loves breaking software, contributing ideas to new features and apparently writing blogs while consuming large amounts of coffee.

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