What I Wish I Knew

Anecdotal stories about things I learned as an Engineer

By: Monica Miller

About Me

- Bachelors in Mechanical Engineering – 2019
  - Magna Cum Laude
  - ASME Manufacturing Science and Engineering National Winner (Senior Design)
- Masters in Systems Engineering – 2021
  - JSOM Scholar with High Distinction
- Interned at USAA in 2018
- Started my career as a Data Engineer in 2019 at USAA
- Developer Advocate at Starburst
  - Transitioned to Developer Advocacy in April of this year

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Agenda

- Work
- Life
- Myths
- Q&A

Disclaimer: I am specifically talking about things I learned the hard way. There are many more topics to address than what I'll mention, but I want to talk about things other than pay that I had no idea about.

Work

There will always be more

Work - Mentors vs Sponsors

- **Mentors:** People who give you feedback, typically with more experience than you. They encourage you to improve so you can create more opportunities for yourself.
- **Sponsors:** People in positions of power who advocate for you. They create opportunities for you.

Work - Career Growth

- **Scout Careers:** No idea all the careers that were still in tech when I joined.
- **Industry Matters:** You can switch, but your experience will help you. FinServ is behind 10 years in technology.
- Switching

Some of this overlaps, and there are specific careers for specific industries.

Work - No Silent Suffering

- **Ask Questions:** The seniors don't know the answer either, but they may be able to help point you the right direction.
- **Communicate With Your Boss:** My manager had absolutely no idea how important I was until I left my role. Part of that was on me.
  - They aren't going to know your worth unless you tell them.
  - They aren't watching your long hours or your teammates mistakes - they have more important things to do.

Work - When to Leave

- **Your team makes or breaks your experience:** If you don't like the people you are working with, start networking immediately. Find a way to move on. Do not suffer for longer than you need to.
- **Women stay in jobs longer than they should:** Listen to the canaries before you and leave your job.
- **Remaining loyal can end up hurting your career:** Job hoppers tend to get big raises, better benefits, and a recalibration on work/life balance.

Life

Find what works for you

Life - Remote Work

- **Create a Separation:** There will always be more work, and the computer is always there. Find some way to mentally switch from one zone to the other.

- **Take Sick/Mental Health Days**: Just because you can work while sick, doesn't mean you should.

- **Schedule Around Work:** The work is there when you get back, but don't push off something for work.

Life - Identity

- Many people make work their identity (I have).

But the Hard Truth is:

The company doesn't give a damn about you.

- Know the top 5 things that matter to you before work, and make sure you maintain a relationship with them.

Myths

Glad I went against these

Myths - Startups are Scary

Facts:
- Startups are notoriously <u>male dominated</u>. However, I now work with more women than I did at my enterprise company!!! So it's really case - by - case and role dependent.
- There is a risk associated with startups, but do your research and trust your gut.
- Better benefits.
- Accelerate your Career.
- Mid-Stage and Late-Stage startups feel like a family.

Myths - Don't Talk About Money

Facts:

- Talking about money with a trusted circle helps to eliminate some of the "What Ifs".
- Understand what your job title is, your location, and the national average.
- Discuss with both genders what they are getting paid – and be honest yourself.

Myths - You Need a Five Year Career Plan

Facts:

- You should be constantly evolving and thinking about what you want to do in the future.
- Forcing yourself into a specific plan does not allow you to capitalize on opportunities that are presented to you.
- Take risks early in your career.

Last Thoughts/Helpful Links

- Create an **Elpha** account.
- If you want to become a software engineer, look at becoming an open source contributor.
- Link to: **Women are Over Mentored and Under Sponsored**
- Link to: **Women stay in jobs longer than they should**
- Link to: **How to Make a Counteroffer**

Thank you!

Monica