

CS33012 Software Engineering

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The software engineer that I have chosen to write about is Marc Andreessen. He is famous for co-authoring Mosaic, one of the first web browsers, co-founding Netscape and co-founding and partnering in the venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz to which his name is associated. Andreessen has interests in many other businesses, technologies and projects and is currently sitting on the Facebook board of directors. He has received honours such as being inducted into the World Wide Web Hall of Fame alongside other famous software engineers like Tim Berners-Lee and Eric Bina. It must be said that his career has not gone without controversy, namely an offensive tweet regarding net neutrality in India, but from a business standpoint I can only respect what he has developed and created. Andreessen has inspired me as a developer and software engineer. He has shown me that it is possible to be successful as a programmer and that it is possible to use the skills that learning programming provide as an entry point into the world of business and generate millions, if not billions of dollars in revenue. I really resonate with what he has done with his venture capital firm as it is inspiring to see him invest in start-ups and to see how big they can grow. I believe that this helps to further everyone's agendas, generate large sums of money, and lead to greater developments in software today.

Andreessen studied computer science at university and went on to work at NCSA, or the National Center for Super Computing Applications. This was interesting to me as it was here that he worked alongside Eric Bina and Jamie Zawinski to develop Mosaic. Mosaic was the first widely used web browser. This was a pivotal point in the world of computer science as people started to realise the potential of the web browser and the internet, which is the foundation of so much of today's world. The popularisation of Mosaic came hand in hand with the popularisation of the world wide web. One can argue that Mosaic is the reason that the internet is so widely used today. Although it only lasted for a few years it is clear to see now that the general uptake in usage of Mosaic inspired and encouraged work on new

and improved browsers, namely Netscape. After Andreessen graduated, he moved to California. It was here that he met Jim Clark. Clark had seen the potential of Mosaic and together with Andreessen founded Netscape, which was largely built on Mosaic.

The Netscape Navigator, or simply just “Netscape”, was the project that really launched Andreessen’s career. He featured on the cover of Time magazine for the initial public offering or IPO of the company. This was a big moment in Andreessen’s life as it was the first time that many people put a face to the name behind Netscape.

In 1998, AOL acquired Netscape for \$4.2 billion dollars which made Andreessen a very wealthy man. What inspired me personally was that Andreessen did not decide to retire and leave the industry. Instead, he founded LoudCloud along with Ben Horowitz. LoudCloud, later known as Opsware, was one of the first companies to commercialise and sell software as a service. They provided hosting and software services to consumers, mainly in the line of e-commerce platforms, as well as automating large-scale computer system and data centre work. Hewlett-Packard bought out LoudCloud for \$14.25 per share. Andreessen owned just over 9 percent of the company at the time which netted him just shy of \$140 million. This really inspired me as the deal came after a time where people thought the company would go bust. This was due to the tech bubbles and market crashes at the time, where there was a lot of hype around new tech companies, leading to hugely inflated stock prices. However, Andreessen’s company made it through this and still came to be profitable for him. I take encouragement from this as it shows me that no matter what is happening, you do not know what will happen to your software or how important it will be in the future, and it is always valuable to work hard on your interests and projects.

After the sale of Opsware (formally LoudCloud), Andreessen and Horowitz worked together again. They founded the famous venture capital company Andreessen Horowitz. This company inspires me the most and is why I look up to Andreessen. The sheer volume of start-ups that they have given life to amazes me. For example, over the last 12 years Andreessen Horowitz have held shares in Twitter, Skype, Airbnb, Foursquare, Stripe, Facebook, Oculus VR, BuzzFeed and Roblox. Most

recently they have invested in OpenSea, who are currently leaders in the NFT world.

It is clear to me that Marc Andreessen has led a long and prosperous career in software. His ability to come up with new ideas is something that inspires me. I take influence from his productivity during the mid-90's and early 00's, where he co-founded and sold multiple billion-dollar companies. His influence on the software world has been enormous, from his own technologies to his investments which give new software companies the finance that they need to succeed. I aspire to succeed in the world of computer science in the same way that he did, and still does to this day.

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