A Day in the life of...

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MY ALARM GOES OFF...

Depending on whether I'm travelling to the office in London or working from my office at home, I tend to get up at some point between 6:30am - 8:00am. I like to have breakfast at the office catching up on some news, so I start the day with a walk - either locally or get off the tube a couple of stops early. Once at my desk I'll grab some fruit, or a bowl of cereal and check out whatever is happening in tech.

I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR...

As Head of Software Development, I am responsible for the design, development and deployment of software products for my company. I have a number of software developers and testers reporting to me, who write the software my company produces. However, I am still very much "hands-on", so day-to-day I also write code, attend meetings to discuss any issues and upcoming work and troubleshoot any issues that arise with the software..

I GOT MY JOB...

I went to university to study Mechanical Engineering, but quite quickly found that it wasn't for me. I got a job working for a software company installing their software on customer's computers. At that time I got interested in how software is written. I began to read some books (this was before there was so much info on the internet) and slowly taught myself to write code. I had a number of jobs as a coder, before settling in a company which I enjoyed and have been there for 11 years – working my way up to Head of Development.

AT SCHOOL I STUDIED...

For my GCSEs I studied Maths, English, Geography, Physics, Biology, French & CDT. Then for A-level I studied Maths, Physics & Geography. I don't think these subjects helped me to get my current job, except to say learning to study is important to be a programmer. As a rapidly moving field, you constantly must keep up with new frameworks and trends. Many people believe you need to be very mathematical to be a programmer – maybe true in some fields, but writing code is probably nearer to language skills than mathematical skills.

MY TYPICAL DAY...

Work tends to start at around 8:30am. It is fairly common in software development to have a daily meeting – called a "stand up" – where you discuss with your team what you have been working on, what you will work on today, and anything that is stopping you. The day is mostly spent writing and testing code, and there is usually another meeting thrown in somewhere. These tend to be technical, discussing with peers an issue or complex piece of work coming up.

THE KEY SKILLS I USE IN MY JOB...

The key skill for a programmer is problem solving. If you like games that present you with complex puzzles with multi-step solutions, you'll probably love programming. If you enjoy making things, eg. woodworking, you'll probably get the same sense of satisfaction seeing your program work and people using it to make their day easier (or enjoy themselves in the case of game programming). It takes quite a while to get good at programming, and you must dedicate quite a lot of time to reading about practices and common patterns of software development.

THE BEST PART OF MY JOB IS...

As I said above I love the problem solving aspect of software development. As a manager I am challenged every day to ensure my reports are happy, productive and enjoying what they do. In my opinion work should be fun, not just a boring office job. The people I work with are my friends and like to go out for lunch and for a drink after work. It is quite a laid-back culture – people work hard but love to have a joke and some fun too. Another great thing for me is I do not have to wear a suit for work. It is very casual, jeans and a t-shirt usually.

THE WORST PART OF MY JOB IS...

The toughest part may be frustration when you cannot quite understand why something doesn't work the way you expect. The best way to manage this is usually step away from the computer for an hour and do something different. I often wake up the next morning and realise exactly the mistake I have made somewhere – or even just explain the problem to a colleague and you'll realise where you've gone wrong. Another tough part is meetings – unfortunately, some of them are long and boring. You manage this by only attending the ones you need to.

MY ROLE MODEL GROWING UP WAS...

My Dad was my role model, he was a hard worker and great fun to be around. He worked as an electrician, and I always wanted to follow in his footsteps, but he told me to find a job that pays better and requires less manual labour. Because he worked in people's house a lot, he seemed to know people wherever we went. I don't think we ever went into a restaurant without someone he knew saying "hi". It really did seem like everybody knew him locally.

AFTER WORK...

If I'm in the London office this means a pretty long commute on a packed underground train – not the best part of my day by a long shot. Far better to grab a drink with some friends or colleagues and wait for the trains to quiet down a bit. After about 7:30pm they are a lot nicer. If I am working from home, it's just shut the laptop and go for a walk and I'm done. I tend to cook dinner, or my wife does and watch some TV until about 10:30pm.
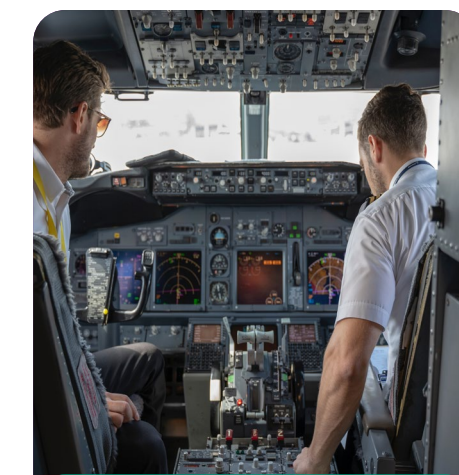
MY PLAN B...

One of my dreams growing up was to be an airline pilot. Unfortunately, this never came to fruition, but as a small consolation at 25 I decided to get my private pilot's license. A career in programming pays well enough that I can still pursue my dream of flight but as a hobby, which is great!