

Hi,

It feels strange yet exciting that all the things in my career and personal life for the last nine years were setting the stage for an opportunity to be a great Network Engineer. Back at the beginning of those nine years, I left for college completely on my own, with no real support, money, nor career path. I had always been a scientist but felt I didn't have the opportunities to see what there was to offer. I entered a Business Administration program at MU and found myself lost in that I did not know where my future would lead. Before then I had never really been on a computer. At one time in my childhood, my parents bought a computer due to all the hype surrounding them, but it only ended up tucked away in a corner of our home. I was the only person to really turn it on save for some word processing my sister did for class. Even though I was too young to understand computers I remember fiddling with it and never quite getting it to do something exciting. Eventually I gave up and it was discarded. Once I entered college, that all changed.

When I arrived at college I heard about the computer labs when I was encouraged to check my university email account for messages on academic matters. Eventually I found this to be a good way to keep in touch with my friends from high school, who had also begun to use email and chat. All of the sudden everything exploded. I remember many long days and nights in the computer labs. I would get out of classes at the end of a school day and after eating dinner speed to the labs to spend the remaining time, from then until close, exploring everything I could. I would be there for eight to nine hours straight flying through the information explosion that was the Internet. I was amazed. I knew I was a curious person and loved consuming information but I never thought that something could be so wondrous. I constantly felt as though I couldn't get the computer to move fast enough. From then on I spent a large part of my time on computer, consuming, sorting, and parsing information for anything I could use to better myself and those around me.

College continued and I went through the usual inundation of a jam packed curricular, extracurricular, and social activities. I quickly became the information and technology person for many of the student groups that I was involved with. I eventually applied for a very costly loan through the university just to purchase my own computer. I also decided that since I spent so much time in the computer labs, I might as well work for them. Besides, I desperately needed the money. I ended up working there for four years and half way through was promoted to a supervisory position. This only accelerated my growth into an information oriented person.

Over two years through college I found I had very little interest in making Business Administration my career focus and decided that no matter how difficult it was, I had to change my degree program right then to Computer Science. It turned out to be more difficult than I anticipated but I was able to make the transition. People all around me were receiving poor grades and switching out of computer science to different programs. It seemed as though several times more effort was needed just to be "good enough". I was most certainly not satisfied with mediocrity. Soon I found a groove and while I progressed, I used my classes to find other areas of technology to seek out. The more I learned, the more I realized how much I did not know.

I continued to sneak my foot in the door of a few good opportunities. Networking was not very popular in my degree program and was an elective at the time, so I was not introduced to it there. Somehow, I stumbled on a position to do programming work on network applications for the data networking group at the University of Missouri. This data networking group was, and still may be, one of the most organized for large state institutions due to an early decision to combine IT resources. It was here that I found my passion and watched as our network grew and continues to grow in scale and as the consumption of bandwidth never seems to cease.

On the day I graduated, my student position was annulled and I found myself heartbroken as I was unable to be hired on full time as there were no positions. Just shy of a year later a position opened up and I was asked to interview for it. I was back, and from then on I have spent almost every waking moment learning about, creating, and using data networks.

It feels as though I was meant to be a Network Engineer and I am so thankful that I am lucky enough to have something that is not only my career but my passion. So this is why I feel like every moment since then has culminated to this opportunity. Do not get me wrong, I am not an extremist and I am definitely an extrovert. Computers are not my only activity in life and believe myself to be a well rounded individual. I like to hike and camp amongst other outdoor activities. I have a gym membership, and I use it. I train in Judo, and attempt to cultivate bonsai. I read a lot of books that are mostly non-fiction. I go out with my friends and would play more videos games if I could only afford it. I enjoy fine food and drink, watch movies, and listen to music, but it all comes back to that feeling. That feeling as though I am part of a vast current of people flowing through the ether, spending their time fascinated with information and doing whatever they can to collect it, organize it, and make it more accessible to others. Data networking is connecting people with information, and that is who I am.