Sam's Club System Operator

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Introduction

Have you ever looked up at the top of shopping in Sam's Club? Do you try to count the inventory that is loaded on top of the wooden pallets? If so, then just know people like myself have already done that for you. Working as a system operator for Sam's Club was not something that I had intentionally planned to happen. It started back in June when my friend, Andres suggested that I come work with him and our other friend Noah. At the time I had only a fast food restaurant experience, so working at a warehouse was the change I was looking for. I had applied and got an interview with my current manager Brian Loving.

The interview went well, and I was excited to start as a forklift driver, but in the interview I had mentioned that I was attending college for a cyber security degree. The 7303 DC, Distribution Center 7303, at the time was really just a warehouse with freight stocked. On the floors, there were no assets, no scanners, SDC wasn't even established or running. There was only IDC, which is an importing system. There were no servers to set up for the Systems team to even exist. I took a serious interest in systems and technical issues so my manager noticed it. I continued to show that same interest when it came time to pick who would be chosen for the System Operators team. When I got into this position, I was hoping I would grow my knowledge or how to troubleshoot in a professional environment. What does an IT position entail and was I ready for it and how can I improve my communication skills?

Sam's Club System Operator Internship

Beginning of Internship

Rewinding it back to when I first started in September, I had no clue what to expect as this was my first warehouse job, and I somehow managed to land a key role. Not that anything bad had been done previously for our department, but it was kind of like starting from scratch. When I say scratch, I mean we had no office at first we ran from a table for about a month. I have been working at Sam's Club 7303 Distribution Center for about three months prior to this new position, so I was familiar with the environment, but not with the process the position came with. The freight that we first carried came from Williamsburg DC 6088 to store at our facility. The thing that surprised me was that these very same packages I was moving went right to Sam's Club that I have been going to since I was 10 years old. It was like an "AHA" moment for me, but I finally figured out the flow of production.

Managing my Environment

The very first training that I received to work, AWI's or Associate Work Instructions. This was made by my manager, and they first taught me how to map myself to the system drive. Then I was taught what a "bucket" was in how we drop it to get our labels. At first everything just sounded like gibberish, Bucket, LPN's, BMAT, and all of these other brand new terms felt like they were going to try my brain for the first few days. What had I gotten myself into? The one question that raced in and out as new concepts came and went. I decided to bring a pin and path the next day. When I arrived the second day, I could remember vividly, when I came back to our station, I did a walk-through of the warehouse on foot, and this moment was so surreal to me, because when I was first hired, we only had a scene of Pyramids stacked freight, I was used to riding on a forklift, so walking while on the clock felt odd.

Management Structure

The management structure at 7303 is like that of a rooted tree, each manager is under our Director Harvey Chicot, then from there each manager has a function or title. For example, my direct manager, Brian is the QA/ Systems Manager and I am under him along with reports clerk and other QA associates. Lyft drivers are under our shipping and receiving managers, maintenance staff are under the maintenance area managers. Each manager and associate are sorted into different shifts, between S1, S2, and S4. Each staff member has a system operator assigned to them, and we split up the total workflow between us three.

Major Work Duties

The duties that we three vary, one project that comes to mind that we had to complete was inputting all assets into BMAT. Battery Maintenance Application is something that systems and maintenance used to keep track of lift batteries and assets that we own. From radios, laptops, time clocks, and any other technological devices that we have under our facilities roof. At first, the task seemed impossible, and it took a long time to even build it up as far as it is now. Without assets and BMAT, it would make our jobs virtually impossible to do since it's a library that houses, serial numbers, assets, IDs, Mac, addresses, and other device information, that would be helpful in case the device needs to be sent in for repair. This application also allows associates to check out the assets into the app. Checking out assets is one of the main functions that system operators have to do, taking inventory and troubleshooting systems, issues for the warehouse, and even for associates.

Skills & Knowledge of Cybersecurity

Taking inventory is a simple process, but without a plan, it can get chaotic or confusing. We keep an inventory of labels used and printed for the different departments, boxes used for

packing for FC or the Fulfillment Center. Counting inventory entails, going to the aisles that the

inventory is located, and taking note of how many of which we have; for example, we have

different links, and for different types of printers if I were to go back in the aisles and see that we

have two full pallets of 3 x 3 labels for our ZT230 type printer I'd write down 120 boxes. Now,

for boxes, it's a little different, our boxes come in different categories, L1, L2, M3, M5, and S4.

These boxes are used for FC packing where we ship directly to members. Walking through the

aisle you can see that they are spread around at random between 5 or 6 different aisles. I keep a

category that I count L1 and L2 one day then another I may only count M3 and M5.

How ODU Curriculum Prepared me

Now troubleshooting systems is another one of our main tasks that can include as small

as a scan gun, not scanning labels correctly, or even as big as the entire system going down, and

nothing working, a system job is to reduce the root cause along with the support team. When it

comes to mind it was about no allocation on a PO or purchasing order. Every time we went to try

and receive it, it gave us a message, stating that there were no items allocated to the particular

PO. We opened up a ticket in our X-Call and support jumped into the chat, and informed us that

they were checking on the issues for us. They first asked if we could create a new delivery for

the PO, but it gave us another error. This back-and-forth messaging kept up for about three

hours, and it was time for me to leave before the issue was resolved, and Ronald, our S2 systems

operator, took over.

Fulfilled Goals

Another incident that comes to mind is one that kept happening, is the ZT230 printers on

FC kept going down. My first thoughts were to try to turn it on and turn it off hoping it would

trigger something going off with the printer, but nothing happened. Then I thought about

something I learned in class and it helped me figure out the problem. Using the CMD prompt I took the IP address of the printer and pinged it using "Ping" and he gave me back a response so from that point, I knew that the device had connection and could be found, it just had a cache issue. This gave me a new understanding on how to use a command prompt, because at first I would think of it on a technical scale to try troubleshooting only computers.

Motivating Aspects

One skill pertaining to cyber security that I already had prior to getting the internship position, was the ability to assess an issue with a device using logical deduction. Logical deduction is the ability to look at a problem and link parts together. For example, the printers and their issues, I wasn't taught how the printer worked, but I was fixing it. I took what I already knew about my home printer and applied that to this new printer, which didn't take ink, had labels instead of paper, and wasn't connected wirelessly. It had an issue, where nothing would print out of it, it was powered and had everything in the correct spot, but nothing came out when we sent the print command. I had an idea, but didn't know if it would work. When my printer at home gets like this I disconnect the power to reset the cache and clear the print jobs from the computer. This head worked and I didn't have to engage support this time which was a contribution to a motivating aspect.

Discouraging Aspects

Logical deduction is a skill that has proven beneficial for this internship, as well as the technical skills I have learned from ODU curriculum. When school to note was the ability to take the IP address, MAC address, and know how to put them in use. I first felt like a child that got a new toy the first time I opened the command prompt, I knew how to put it in use. The ping command I learned in my cyber techniques and operation course come and use when I need to

make sure something that didn't have a user interface like a PCS0,, phones, anything connected

on the network could be pinged. Pinging a device is simple. You open the command prompt, then

type pinging and the device's IP address and you can send bits of it into the device to see if you

can get a response. This alone helps because without it, I probably would have no clue what to

say was wrong with the device.

Challenging Aspects

Now, regarding the hopes of what I wanted to take away from the internship, enhancing

my communication skills, how to troubleshoot in a professional career field and what an IT

position entails. These three goals were met within the first few months and I can think of key

points in my time there I can bring up like, for example, taking my Communication and

enhancing it, I've taken steps to clarify information before opening tickets, because when we

open tickets at first, we would be pushed to open them as fast as possible since it impacted

downtime. Now the way I look at it, if I open the ticket without the correct information I can

make the resolution process take much longer. Looking into it, and trying to understand the issue

is a step that I have put in place mentally to help with these tasks. So now, when I open a ticket, I

get what application it is affecting, what steps result in an error code, and what gray it is

affecting and screen screenshots of the error code.

Recommendations for Interns

No, learning how to troubleshoot goes hand-in-hand with communication skills. What I

mean is learning how to communicate information to different parties is how the troubleshooting

part works. Now I thought I would be learning the technical side of solving the issue, I did see

some, but not much to really understand. These two takeaways link back together, and my third

take away. Which is, what an IT position consists of and was I ready for it from dealing with

simple access requests or troubleshooting a system down error message. I say I have learned what an IT job consists of. If I was ready for it, I'd say yes. I'd say the one thing that lets me know is whenever we get a new issue or ask it to deal with a bolt of excitement runs over my body, wanting to know how it works or what the route cause was. The challenging parts for me were the tasks that were counting, I say this because I have an active mind. I can count it over and over, but my mind tends to wonder and I lose track of the numbers.

Conclusion

For future interns that are thinking about a system operator job, say go for it. It's a great way to see how you would hold an ICT position and it taught me some great communication skills. Being a System operator has also taught me that IT supports the business and provides services when needed whether it be helping someone navigate an application or helping resolve a system down issue. You must keep a cool and calm head to deal with it. From now on my professional career will remind myself to keep calm and break the problem down into simple steps in order to get my resolution.

Pictures