How I would Introduce Myself Professionally

My name is Ayanah Hanks, and I am a senior at Old Dominion University studying cybersecurity with a growing interest in the hands-on side of technology. When I first started in cybersecurity, I knew that I wanted to work with technology, but I wasn't sure what area of cybersecurity I wanted to work in. As I started to gain more experience, I realized that I enjoy working directly with technology like when I am building, troubleshooting, and finding solutions to problems. I enjoy being able to work out a problem instead of just being handed the answer. I have also learned that I work well in environments that are collaborative where I learn from others while also contributing my own skills and ideas as well.

Key Experiences That Shaped My Path

One experience that has a great impact on the direction of my career has been working as a Hardware technician at IP Configure. This experience gave me the opportunity to work with technology in a way that I haven't before. Instead of only using a computer, I was able to physically build and work with servers. I started with the motherboard and other parts, installed them into the chassis, and prepared the servers to be placed onto racks where they would be imaged and configured. I also worked with Linux, ticketing systems, and troubleshooting technical issues.

Working with hardware has helped me discover that I genuinely enjoy the technical and physical side of problem solving. When building a server, it requires patience and attention to detail because one small mistake can affect the entire system. When troubleshooting it has taught me that problems are always solved right away. Sometimes I would have to try different solutions, investigate what went wrong, and learn from that process. I had to learn to look at the problem from different perspectives and keep working instead of getting frustrated right away.

My experience studying abroad in England also contributed to my development both personal and professional. By being in a different educational environment required me to adjust to a new setting and become more comfortable with unfamiliar ways of learning. It exposed me to different perspectives and showed me how there is not only one correct way to approach a problem. By being in a completely different environment it made me more open-minded, and I became more used to dealing with situations that are foreign to me. I believe this is important because in cybersecurity I will have to know how to adapt as technology and security threats are constantly changing.

What I Learned Along the Way

By going through these experiences, I have come to learn what type of professional I want to become. I have learned to pay more attention to detail, patience, teamwork, and adaptability.

Most importantly, I learned that I don't want to just understand how technology is protected but I like working with the technology itself. I like having to physically work through an issue when trying to solve a problem. I also want to work in a place where I can continue to learn from the people around me.

I also learned that there is nothing wrong in asking for help. There have been times when I did not know how to solve a problem or did not understand a task I was working on. Instead of pretending like I knew what I was doing, I learned to ask the people around me for help. Their experience and knowledge helped me better understand the problem and I was then able to apply that.

My experiences have also strengthened my interest in hardware and hands-on technology. Before my job as a hardware technician at IP Configure, I wasn't sure what direction I wanted to take in cybersecurity. This experience has showed me that I like working with technology itself and not just trying to understand how to protect it.

Where I am Headed

As I continue my education in cybersecurity, I am constantly taking steps towards developing my professional skills. I am currently studying for my Security+ certification, which will help strengthen my knowledge in cybersecurity and show how I am committed to this field. I am also continuing to gain practical experience through my internship where I am learning how cybersecurity can be applied to help the needs of companies.

I am still exploring exactly what role in cybersecurity I would want in the future. I am currently interested in areas like Internet of Things (IoT) security, infrastructure, embedded systems security, and other roles that involves technical work that would be hands on. I know I still have time, and I do not feel like I need to have my entire career figured out right now. Due to my past experiences, they have helped me figure out the type of work I want to do.

My journey so far has shown me that discovering a career path doesn't happen all at once. It may take working in a new environment, gaining practical experience or trying something unfamiliar to understand what you really enjoy. Being a hardware technician helped me gain an interest in the hands-on side of cybersecurity, while studying abroad helped me to be able to adapt to different kind of environments. Altogether these experiences help shape the professional identity that I am growing as a student. I may not know where I want to end up, but I believe I am heading in the right direction.

Disclaimer : AI assistance from ChatGPT was used to help improve clarity and review grammar. All the content reflects my own experiences and professional goals.