Writing Assignment Two: Personal Narrative Essay

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Curiosity Early On

Growing up, I could sit for hours and observe people work, and come up with a list of 'Why' and 'How' questions to ask them afterward. My grandfather had a small landscaping company growing up, and I loved nothing more than to watch him pull apart his equipment to repair something and then put it back together and ensure it worked properly. I could sit and watch him for hours with a snack and afterward proceed to bombard him with all the questions I had come up with. I was fascinated with how different elements worked together to make something work and how we could magically tear it apart to fix it.

As I got older my curiosity for how things worked stuck with me. I was taking apart anything that I could get my hands on. Sometimes fixing it, but also breaking things more than how they originally were. One day my older brother came home with a bunch of electronic parts he had bought and said he was going to build a pc. Even though I was only allowed to watch and not touch anything, I was fascinated with watching him put together the pc, piece by piece. My passion for understanding how things worked only grew from that moment. Building and fixing computers, taking apart equipment to change broken parts, and even learning how car engines work in order to help troubleshoot and fix them at my uncle's mechanic shop. There wasn't anything I wouldn't try breaking apart to understand how it worked and how I could fix it. "Let me take a look at it first" was my go-to phrase!

Troubleshooting 101

After high school, I decided to join the Navy and worked as an aircraft mechanic. Somehow the universe worked in my favor, and I was lucky enough to work on older aircraft that had mechanical engines. This meant that there were no lights that appeared when the engines

had issues and there was no device that we could hook and to read which system was failing. Understanding how aircraft engines worked, and schematics became my best friends and forced me to master my troubleshooting skills.

Most days, my shop would get a call about a specific engine not making power, or no fuel flow at start-up, or when the planes were close to landing, they would call in and explain what mechanical issues they were experiencing. The flight engineers would provide us with a list of primary and secondary symptoms experienced to better diagnose the issue and resolve it. The adrenaline rush I would get when the flight crew was awaiting me and my workers to troubleshoot the possible issue and try to resolve it so the plane could take off and complete the mission is a feeling I can't describe. Hot metal, propellors spinning, and engine noise in the background as I had to troubleshoot and determine if the issue was simply a closed valve that needed to be replaced or would we have to cancel the mission flight to replace a major component. An immense amount of pressure and responsibility came with that job, but it forced me to truly understand how the engines worked to troubleshoot issues with the least amount of time and cost. Working under that type of pressure refined my troubleshooting skills!

What's Next?

Being in the military taught me many valuable skills that I could take and apply in the chapter of my life, and it also provided me with the opportunity to advance my education. While I learned a tremendous amount working as an aircraft mechanic, I knew I wanted to shift paths in my professional career. I wanted a career where there would always be something new to learn and a career that would provide me and my family with job security. I decided to pursue my Bachelor's in Cybersecurity and enrolled in an Information Technology Service Desk Bootcamp to learn the basics of IT in order to secure a job in my new career path. Some of the technical

skills that I acquired while enrolled at Old Dominion University were networking security, ethical penetration testing, Python, and Linux. Each course built on the previous one, encouraging me to refine the skills I have acquired over the years.

The skills I acquired over the years in my personal life, the Navy, and educational settings allowed me the opportunity to secure my first IT position as a Service Desk Analyst. It has been stressful managing my personal life, work, and school but it has also made me drastically improve my time management skills. I have been able to use the skills I've acquired over the years to effectively and efficiently execute tasks and projects at my current position. Managing network security changes and maintenance, managing projects for expansions and changes to the organization, troubleshooting, and repairing hardware and software throughout the organization were some of the responsibilities I've had at my current organization.

I've also had the opportunity to work closely with our network engineering and information security teams to expand my knowledge and gain relevant experience moving forward in my professional career. I've had the opportunity to assist our engineering team with setting up new switches in our data centers, assisting with the migration of our email servers, upgrading and implementing new software and hardware throughout the organization, and performing network troubleshooting. At the same time, I have had the opportunity to work with our information security team in implementing a new 2FA policy, updating our imaging servers, and auditing users with specific privileges. Being able to get on-the-job training from both teams has truly allowed me to improve my experience which I know will be beneficial in any future positions I move on to.

Besides Experience

My skills and accomplishments don't end there! I've always understood that the job market is constantly changing, and I will need to make myself as marketable as possible and that means doing things outside of work and school to stand out. I've always had a passion for learning, so learning new skills and knowledge outside of work has been more of a pleasure than extra work.

The certifications that I have been working towards on my time, have been based on the job analysis I have performed. Based on common requirements that potential job posts have listed, I have scheduled three certifications that I plan to have completed by the end of 2024. The first certification completed is ITIL v4, which covers the foundations of IT service management and best practices. I chose to get this certification because it provides a great foundation that can be applied to any position or team. The second certification I have completed is CompTIA Security+, which covers the foundation of system security and best practices as well. I mainly chose this certification because the information can be applied to any organization and most government positions require the applicants to have this certification in order to apply. The last certification I plan on having completed by the end of the year is Cisco's CCNA, which covers the network fundamentals that are necessary for troubleshooting network issues anywhere my career may lead. I do not doubt that my education, experience, certifications, and endless curiosity will assist me in furthering my career and becoming a valuable asset anywhere I go.

"You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives." - Clay P. Bedford