

Hayden Vermeulen

Dr. Tucker Steffen

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## **The Journey to Forensic IT: A Shift from Cybersecurity**

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### **Introduction: A Pathway Redefined**

The choice to switch my academic concentration from cybersecurity to forensic IT was not made easily. Originally, I was captivated by cybersecurity, motivated by the excitement of safeguarding data and networks against different risks. But as I progressed through my studies, I unexpectedly discovered that my passion was not only in stopping cybercrimes but also in investigating them post-incident. This discovery prompted me to shift my focus to forensic IT specialization, with criminal justice as a minor. This story describes how the obstacles I faced guided me towards a new but rewarding journey.

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### **Opening Chapter: The Initial Fascination with Cybersecurity**

During high school, my interest in computers and their inner workings sparked my entry into the realm of cybersecurity. I was fascinated by the ever-changing landscape of cybersecurity, specifically in the realm of protecting against cyber attacks. I had a special interest in encryption

and cryptography, understanding how data could be altered to protect it from being seen by others. This initial curiosity drove me to delve into cybersecurity as my main area of study in college, with the goal of becoming skilled at safeguarding systems and networks against advanced threats.

During my college years, I took part in different classes that offered practical learning, like "Network Security Fundamentals" and "Ethical Hacking Techniques." These classes provided me with important experience using various tools and concepts required for defense. According to Smith (2017), my narrative was initially centered around redemption, conquering obstacles to address complicated security problems. I was eager, but I desired more than just defensive techniques—I sought to comprehend the inner workings of cybercrimes, such as the perpetrators and motivations.

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### **The Turning Point: A Passion for Investigation**

A crucial moment occurred in my second year of college, when I decided to enroll in an elective class on digital forensics. This class completely changed how I see things. This was the first time I learned about analyzing data in order to determine the source of a breach and how to gather and protect evidence for legal reasons. The detective-like aspect of the job intrigued me, with each clue revealing a part of the story of what had transpired. McAdams (2001) emphasizes the idea of causal coherence, which allowed me to link my existing knowledge with fresh chances for investigation.

I soon discovered that the investigative procedure for cybercrimes was just as exciting as protecting against them. The thrill of discovering the "who," "what," and "why" became a primary focus of my academic interests, establishing a feeling of thematic unity (McAdams, 2001). The concept of aiding in locating attackers, collecting evidence, and apprehending criminals offered a fresh source of inspiration. The moment I decided to prioritize understanding "what happened" over just preventing attacks started my shift into forensic IT.

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### **Building the Foundation: Shifting to Forensics and Criminal Justice**

Following that pivotal moment, I made the decision to shift my attention towards forensic IT, enabling me to examine, probe, and ultimately assist in resolving cyber incidents. The choice was difficult - it was challenging to shift away from cybersecurity as my main objective, given the time and resources I had already dedicated to it. The story shifted its focus once I chose to pursue a minor in criminal justice. I became more interested in forensics when I added criminal justice to my studies, as it helped me learn the legal side of digital investigations and how to collect, handle, and present evidence in court correctly.

Studying criminal justice as a minor gave me a more profound insight into the system and its connection to digital evidence. The incorporation of this new information enabled me to link various aspects of my studies like technology, law, and investigative techniques, resulting in a stronger connection to my chosen career path. Nguyen (2013) notes how students can make sense of their experiences by creating portfolios, and I had a similar internal process as I merged these disciplines into a unified career trajectory.

**An Unexpected Challenge: Overcoming Doubts**

The shift from cybersecurity to forensic IT faced some difficulties. I had moments of uncertainty where I wondered if the decision to change was the best choice. Some of my colleagues and advisors had doubts too, since forensic IT is a more specialized area than general cybersecurity. Some technical courses, like advanced incident response or legal aspects of cybercrime, initially seemed misplaced. Adapting was a process that required time, as I had to figure out how to use my technical expertise in different and unknown situations.

According to McAdams (2001), causal coherence involves linking one event to another, and this concept was important in keeping me focused. I started to see connections in my experiences; the apparently unrelated events of studying intrusion detection in cybersecurity were closely connected to how I used similar abilities in collecting proof for an inquiry. Over time, my story started to form, demonstrating how my cybersecurity background was crucial in enhancing my skills for conducting digital forensic inquiries.

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**Solution: Gaining Confidence and Identity in Forensic IT**

As I delved deeper into forensic IT, I started to discover my own place in the vast world of cybersecurity. I participated in a research project studying malware, tasked with determining how various types of harmful software left clues that could be utilized as proof to piece together an attack. I started gaining experience by assisting law enforcement agencies during an internship,

working together with digital forensic units on actual cases. Blending classroom learning with hands-on experience boosted my confidence and reassured me of my decision.

Nguyen (2013) points out that building a portfolio allowed students to discover new aspects of themselves, a phenomenon I experienced firsthand during my research and internships. I discovered traits within myself that I had not fully valued before - traits such as patience, focus on specifics, and analytical skills, all essential for a thriving profession in forensic IT. These experiences assisted me in redefining my position and crafting a narrative about my abilities and impact in the field.

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### **Conclusion: A Story of Redemption and Integration**

Reflecting on my educational experience, I see it as a tale of redemption, wherein I adjusted and altered my path upon discovering my genuine passion (Smith, 2017). It is also a narrative of merging, as I combined cybersecurity, digital forensics, and criminal justice to outline my career journey. Every class, obstacle, and encounter built upon my comprehension, enhancing my capacity to scrutinize and eventually achieve fairness in the online realm.

Though my beginnings were in cybersecurity, my journey expanded into a more extensive and significant endeavor. In the future, I envision myself as a forensic analyst, potentially aiding in major investigations related to national security. The journey I've been on has provided me with the necessary technical knowledge to grasp intricate cyber problems and the ability to uncover solutions. It's a tale that showcases development, flexibility, and finding a passion I hadn't expected.



## References

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