

My Journey in Cybersecurity So Far

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Abstract

This is a personal narrative essay by me to share my life until this point, summarizing the main events, people, and beliefs that have led me to pursue a career in cybersecurity. This paper will contain details of significant events in my life that have changed the course my life has taken from my ambitions, values, goals, and motivations. People very close to me will also be given proper priority when acknowledging the impact they have had in shaping the man I am today. Furthermore, my academic pursuits will also be of major importance in this essay as it is the phase of my career, I am currently in. My outside ventures outside of my academic pursuits will also be mentioned, detailing my successes and failures. This paper will share my values, experiences, and ambitions I have had during my journey pursuing a cybersecurity career in an increasingly digital world.

Introduction

To better share my initial interest in cybersecurity, I think I should first focus on the person that I am today and how I have naturally shifted toward this path I am currently in. I grew up in a city in the fine state of Virginia. Growing up, the activities that defined me, my values, and my beliefs were religious in nature. I grew up going to church, serving a merciful God, and believing in the fruits of living a righteous life. Because of this, many of my values and pursuits were based on doing something that was right. I grew up in a supportive family with two parents and two siblings. I think it is fair to admit that at my core I am a believer of God looking to work toward inspiring good in this world. My eventual shift towards pursuing a career in cybersecurity has also been largely based on my desire to find a virtuous way to provide for myself and for my family while protecting people from threats to their cybersecurity.

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It was until later that my calling to cybersecurity came. My father was especially active in shaping my future and helping me find value in career pursuits much later in my life. My initial introduction to the world of information technology in general came in the church during my time serving as part of the computer technician team. My role was to manage the day-to-day operations involving cabling, audio management, display management, working with hardware, installing software, uploading data to the church website, managing live streams, and troubleshooting technical problems. These were issues I faced normally as a teenager, and it was at this occupation that I was closely mentored by my good friend Anibal. It was during my time serving in this occupation that I started to gain an interest in doing this for work outside of the church. I was blessed enough to be able to serve and work on two of my passions at the same time. I don't think that I could think of a better introduction to the world of information technology and cybersecurity than the one I was given, and I'm grateful for it.

My Initial Interest in Cybersecurity

While I had an interest in cybersecurity due to my experiences at church, I was not very committed to the idea. I viewed myself almost like a blank canvas that could be changed in so many ways. I was a teenage student confused about what I wanted to do after grade school was over. While I didn't give it much thought, my father pushed the idea of pursuing a career in cybersecurity due to the high demand, high pay, and job demand in the future. My father was also interested in learning about computers before pursuing a career in another field years ago and this interest my father had pushed me into the field. My advantage of being in a technology-rich state and nation reinforced the idea that pursuing a career in cybersecurity would be a good opportunity. Mahmood & Teoh (2018) explain the increase of cybersecurity field leading to a shortage of a cybersecurity workforce. As a twenty-two-year-old, I grew up in a technologically

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advanced world with smart computers, smartphones, and smartwatches. Because of this factual need for a cybersecurity workforce, I felt I was being called to that need. My deciding factor was that I would be able to pursue a virtuous occupation and helping people by protecting their security online. Because of this and my values, I viewed and continue to view cybersecurity as an honorable field to be involved in. This led to my entry into the cybersecurity field as a college student at Germanna Community College.

My Cybersecurity Ventures in College

After becoming a cybersecurity student, I got first-hand experience working with Wireshark, programming languages, and gained a familiarity with modern technology. Saabith et al., (2019) mentions how Python a programming language useful for beginners, provides versatile utility in game development and web development. An important experience in my cybersecurity journey was the freedom that Python programming provided as I was able to work on applications that I designed to function how I saw fit to meet the needs of my academic projects. Working with PFSense to make firewalls rules for virtual machines on local networks and using Wireshark to monitor internet traffic were great experiences I had that introduced me to cybersecurity and networking that were two aspects of information technology. My current pursuit of an information technology help desk technician role has come as a result of taking various courses and learning more about the cybersecurity field. My current pursuit as a Old Dominion University student has shaped my goals and ambitions for the future.

Present Day

Old Dominion University's prestigious cybersecurity program has elevated my interest in the cybersecurity field to a considerable degree. However, I have also experienced recent failure

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in my efforts to attain an internship position in the field of cybersecurity while being a student at Old Dominion University. In the summer semester of this year, I received several rejections from internship opportunities. It is worth noting that I received rejection even after making it to the second level of the interview process of one of the organizations I applied to. However, this recent failure has pushed me to pursue getting a Computing Technology Industry Association A+ certification to ensure I am qualified for an entry-level position after my planned graduation date of May 2026. I think I feel more motivated than ever to accept nothing less than success in this field due to my recent failure.

Motivations and Future Pursuits

I wish to make it known, that if anything is learned about me in this essay, I want the desire I have to be a provider for my family to be included. For over a decade now, my mother has struggled with health and her immune system. She has been pushed to work to help support our family. My motivation is retiring her as soon as possible and take care of the person that has cared for me for so long. I look forward to the day I can retire my mom so she can dedicate more time to improving her health which would mean so much to me, her, and the rest of my family. In this paper, I wish to spread awareness that not all people are as fortunate as others and many people including myself have to struggle for every dollar for rent and every achievement I receive. I have had to struggle working full-time, studying full-time, and financing a home with the collaborative efforts of my family. Furthermore, I wish to promote my brand, my values, my identity, and my ambitions to anyone reading this. Despite my present situation, I still have a positive feelings for what the future may be.

I wish to make it known that as a current O.D.U. student, I have made progress getting a CompTIA A+ certification with plans to receive it by the end of the year to get an entry level I.T.

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help desk technician role. From there, my plan is to get a CompTIA Security+ certification to qualify for a cybersecurity analyst position. With proper networking opportunities with dedicated cybersecurity professionals and with a portfolio filled with programming projects showcasing my skills. I wish to then pursue an occupation as a software programmer to fulfill my long-term cybersecurity goals after gaining initial information technology experience as a I.T. help desk worker.

Conclusion

With an early start in cybersecurity in the state of Virginia serving my local church, I was able to have the fortunate blessing of serving my church as a computer technician. My religious background provided me with values involving the pursuit of a virtuous occupation involving helping other people. My courses allowed me to be introduced to aspects of cybersecurity involving firewalls, networking, and virtual machine management. I am currently working towards completing my CompTIA A+ certification by the end of the year with my planned graduation date following this planned accomplishment in May of next year. Despite failure or success in the cybersecurity field, my motivation strongly includes the desire to retire my mom with the hope her health will improve once the responsibility of work obligations is no longer an issue. If there is any luxury I can provide as a result of my pursuits in this cybersecurity field, it is that my family is taken care of.

References

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