

Inside Perspective on Cybersecurity

Interviewed: Jake Modelewski

Security Analyst

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CYSE 368

Professor Duvall

By: Jonathan Morales

Introduction:

Every individual has a journey that makes them unique to their own experiences. Today I've been given the opportunity to learn about Jake Modelewski's journey and advice on how to flourish in the cybersecurity industry. However, let's take a step back. I've obtained this opportunity by getting into the Student SOC Internship here at Old Dominion University. At the Student SOC Internship, we are the first wave of students to shadow and follow the procedures and processes carried out by the staff at Old Dominion University's in-house Security Operations Center. Requiring students to rapidly develop and put their skills to the test with practical applications in a live environment.

Jake's Journey:

Like many others, Jake's journey into the field of cybersecurity started with curiosity in a different field. Jake had started off by going to school for programming. Eventually landing himself an IT help desk job before then working his way up to a network administrator. He then moved and changed companies and went back to being an IT help desk technician for EVMS. Through social networking at EVMS and narrowing down his personal preferences, he found a passion for cybersecurity engineering. Which led to him becoming a part of EVMS's engineering team. In a turn of events, EVMS had then been merged into Old Dominion University; the engineering team already had positions filled, but EVMS allowed Jake to have a choice of what his job would be. Which led to his choice in cybersecurity becoming a security analyst here at Old Dominion University. Ultimately, leading him to develop a further passion into cybersecurity engineering combining work and previous interests. In the future, Jake wishes to

hopefully still be with Old Dominion University but change job positions more towards cybersecurity engineering. During his time as a security analyst here at Old Dominion University Jake has completed two different projects one being the canvas course for the Student SOC Internship as well as, a document conversion script that is almost completed that converts docx files into markdown files. I had asked Jake, “What makes you continue to work in the field our in?”. He then told me that the obvious answer would be the money, but that's not what truly keeps him in the field. What keeps Jake compelled to continue working in cybersecurity would be the constant mental stimulation of the job. He went on to tell me that there's always something new that requires further research and is never stagnant. Another reason as well is that in cybersecurity there are tons of opportunities to move up the latter and or expand upon your abilities to make more money. Out of curiosity I had asked Jake what he would consider to be his favorite and most challenging part of his job. What he considered to be the most challenging part came down to two different aspects, one being tedious monotonous work that still needs to be completed and the second being the overwhelming architecture of networks and groups of people that is handled by the firewalls at Old Dominion University. While his favorite aspect of his job was the community and culture created by all the employees, he likes how people can be themselves and were friendly with others. Another aspect that is his favorite are projects and how his job requires him to self-learn against a challenge. Additionally, I had asked Jake to assess his strengths and weaknesses in his current job. Starting off, he stated some of his weaknesses, being overexposure and scheduling. Leading to tunnel vision and too much going on taking away from the quality of work he produces if too much is going on at once. While Jake's strengths are his ability to learn quickly, adapt to change, and staying driven.

Advice:

During the interview Jake gave me several great points of advice ranging from skills, critical knowledge, entry-level jobs, and mindsets to keep. Jake suggested that some of the technical skills needed by cybersecurity professionals are network topography, firewall components and handling, network traffic, software and how they're hosted, coding like python, and user interfaces. Jake stated that, "While it is good to understand specific concepts, it is even more important to be able to apply the concept correctly." Distinguishing the difference between simply understanding a topic and mastering it and being able to reproduce it in a given situation. He then further stressed the importance of an individual's mindset as a cybersecurity professional. To excel as a cybersecurity professional, Jake stated that the ability to learn quickly and collaborate as a group are key skills to have. Especially when it comes to being sociable and approachable. Furthermore, taking the initiative puts you tremendously ahead of others and makes you look better and driven to succeed. This was also followed by Jake explaining the importance of staying in the loop with technology and data breaches. Saying that constant learning of information is required to be successful. Additionally, I had asked for Jake's recommendations on entry-level jobs for gaining experience to become a security analyst. He responded by recommending IT help desk jobs since they allow for a lot of exposure to several departments offering the opportunity to network with these people and expand upon your career. For example, Jake used this exact same method in his journey. When he was at EVMS before merging with Old Dominion University. Through his networking experience at the IT help desk at EVMS, he got in contact with the engineering team, eventually leading to his transfer in departments. He also recommended not to be afraid to submit your application to positions even if you think you aren't qualified. Essentially not limiting yourself and getting in your own way from success. Another

question I had asked Jake was, “What clubs or organizations have been useful in his career.”. An organization that Jake recommended was CompTIA since he has used them for certifications and recommended using multiple sources to cross-check new information about technology.

Conclusion:

After my interview with Jake and taking a moment to collect my thoughts and put together all that we had talked about, I had many realizations and gaps of knowledge filled I didn't have previously. Applying what Jake had said to my journey, I have a better understanding of my next steps. Using his advice in the future, I am going to continue to search for information about cybersecurity and technology to keep up to date with recent events and to also keep on applying to jobs even if I feel underqualified not limiting myself by my own mental boundaries. Additionally, Jakes perspective on cybersecurity and his journey further cemented for me that I made the right career decision. Very similar to Jake, I had chosen cybersecurity due to its ever-evolving nature and challenging day-to-day problems. Finally, being able to get advice from someone who's already gone through the processes I am about to go through in my career is an invaluable insight that gives me significant advantages over others.