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Four Rules When Starting Your First I.T. Job

Congrats on getting into the field! Now what?

Here are the Top 4 rules you'll need to know to get started in your first I.T. job.



RULE #1: ASK QUESTIONS

You can't go into your first I.T. job thinking you know everything. You also can't go into an I.T. job thinking you don't know anything at all, nor should you tell yourself that you don't know enough. Think of the

game Tug-of-War. You won't know enough but you also won't know everything either. Just don't stop trying.

When starting your first I.T. job, you may experience things that you've never come across before and that's okay! If this is the case, it's important to ask questions. If you don't know how to do something, if you're unfamiliar with how something works, or the instructions that you're given are not clear, it's best to just ask.



RULE #2: MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE INFORMATION YOU NEED AND TAKE NOTES

99% of the time you will be shadowing somebody. You will be handed some sort of documentation, notes, ticketing system or other information specific to your new workplace. The documentation you'll receive can include the different troubleshooting scenarios you might go through, or it may include other day-to-day scenarios that you should be aware of.



This rule won't be good, though, if you aren't



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retaining the information. You will need to take detailed notes as often as you can. There will be times when you are working on a problem, and you don't have time to take notes. In those situations, take a quick moment to jot down in a couple words what is happening, what you're doing and fill in the notes later. When you get more time, come back to those notes, and add more details.

When you're asking questions, gathering notes, putting together your own information, you may not always need the information or refer back to it later. However, a benefit to having notes is that it can put things into a different perspective which in turn, can help you succeed. You always want to make sure that you have information you need available to you. You never know when those notes will come in handy.

If you're asking questions and taking notes, then you're already two steps further at succeeding in your first I.T. job.

RULE #3: ASK FOR HELP

If you feel like you are asking the questions but not getting the information that you require, just ask for help! It's never a bad thing to ask one of your co-workers, peers, or managers for help. Get the information you require to succeed at what you're doing.



RULE #4: TAKE TIME TO RELAX

Lastly, you need to chill! You're there for a reason. Become a sponge and just take in your new environment. It only gets easier from here. You got this! 🤞





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Industry Event with James Warren

When James joined the Business Information Technology program, it wasn't his first choice. He wanted to get into the Welding program but the waitlist for it was too long. Sometime later, he received an email about an entrance exam for the BIT program. He wrote and passed the exam and decided to follow the BIT route.

When he first started school, James knew he wanted to start a business relating to I.T. He wasn't too keen becoming a programmer. Today, he does work with programmers. His business is tied into the ecosystem of information technology by architecting solutions.

In Term 2, he had a couple of ideas to start his business. By Term 3, he joined the Royal Canadian Navy and met his business partner just before going into basic training.

Together they created, Due North Systems. This business was started in-between the third and last terms of the program.

James used school to fill in the knowledge gaps for his new business. After that, the rest is history.

In his business, they have 5 developers on his team and are capital funded. Some of their work includes research and development. They have customers all over North America. James originally wanted to start a business for the industry project (a possible path for students who are enrolled in an ACE department program) but the department had issues with a student leading a project of other students. He's consulted

and ran projects in the ACE project space.

Among his experiences of running projects and challenging credits, he was the first Vice President and second President of the Bits and Bytes Association. James, Derrick and Tara Brown were some of the people who founded the original BBA group.

Q: If we wanted to start an I.T. company, what is the number one tip you have for students?

Want it. Want it more than you've wanted anything in your life. Entrepreneur is a weird word, and everyone has a different idea on what it is. Just know that it'll be the hardest thing you'll ever do, and it will take all of you. You'll think



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you've given it everything you had but it will continue to take more. It has been hard to start a startup company, but it's also been the most rewarding experience in his career.

Going through the BIT program helped him learn to communicate with his developers on a more interpersonal level by knowing and seeing how they solve problems from their point of view. When he's coming up with solutions and ideas with clients, the bridge between IT and stakeholders are much sturdier. He is able to translate the requirements to his development team in a language they already understand.

Q: What does James look for in terms of hiring?

When James is hiring, he's looking less for academic credentials. When he does do technical interviews with people, he seeks for the ability to communicate the problem and solution domain. It's all about communication with him because he knows that his team can teach and improve your technical skills. If you don't have the ability to communicate and play on a team, then those skills won't be built. He also looks for the interest in what it is you want to do, especially your aspirations and goals. If it seems like you won't enjoy the job that he's about to give you, then you'll never grow.

When your instructors tell you to put together a portfolio, it counts towards showing others what you've learned. In James's

opinion, it doesn't speak about passion. Passion comes from the work you do outside of school. One valuable piece of advice is not showing the work you did in school but how did you code it in other languages. It's super basic and doesn't require any creativity. In the interview process, all they're trying to figure out is "why you".

He also quoted *60 Minutes* for a stat on how remote jobs are going to be more common. Pre-pandemic, 1 in 67 jobs were remote. Now, it's 1 in 9 jobs hiring, specifically, for remote positions. Also keep in mind that the highest and most creative type of jobs won't be remote. Creative group work is better done in an in-person setting than it is remotely. When you're sitting around a boardroom, you can easily identify those who are paying attention and find ways to engage those individuals. You can't



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really do that remotely, even with cameras on.

On Networking

James went on to talk about how important it is to network while in college. It's probably the easiest way to get to know individuals within the field. One core piece of advice he had was for the younger generation of the program. Find people who are over 25 and watch how they work. They have so much more on the line than most would understand. Learn from them. Get to know people and what motivates them and figure out ways to unlock those things for yourself.

Q: Is there a way to know if you're being undervalued in the hiring process?

When you're a fresh graduate, you mean two things to employers: helpdesk and a tax incentive. The ability to move up or around that company will be based on how you show your value over time. The value comes in when you find out where you want to go.

Are you looking for benefits or looking to be part of something that can be bigger than everybody currently involved?

Companies will offer you this wage, but you wanted a higher one. Say yes to the lower offer but ask for an extra week of vacation or draw a road map showing how much value you'll have in a year from now.

A Golden Story

James's golden story involves project space, a student on his project, and a need to come up with strategies for the product. They came up with a platform system using Kubernetes. They taught the student how to do continuous integration/continuous delivery (CI/CD) and red, green deployment. Being able to do CI/CD and red/green deployment with Kubernetes gave this individual job offers without applying. He ended up with a lead developer position in a company right out of school.

One of the key points of this project space story is that the student figured out what technologies he wanted to use and what the industry was looking for. He got to shape the narrative of his experience. In the project



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space, you can build up that experience more than in a co-op. No company will offer you the experience of anything business critical when in a co-op. You need to decide which one is more valuable to invest your time in: valuable knowledge that can be easily shifted towards your goals by doing an industry project OR the money for a potentially entry level position.

Q: How do projects get paid for in the project space?

There are some projects run by research programs and they have grant funding. They're usually headed up by an instructor and not bad as projects, but the level of control/autonomy goes down once money gets involved. He even suggested that you can

work a part time job while doing the industry project. Do your own cost/benefit analysis. Why are you in school? Why are you here? Is this aligning with your goals while in school?

If you have the mindset that it's not about them, it's about you, even if they're holding you back on a project, you can still push yourself. Be the most valuable of the team.

That's how you do well in the project space.

Students who choose industry project as first place choice are going to come in with the mindset of that's where they want to be. This is how you'll find success.