



From School to the Office - Jules Cote

One of the scariest events of my life was starting my internship in my chosen field after twenty years of school. I was going to be a video game programmer and my life-long dream was about to be realized. It was more intimidating than any first day of school I have had. I was sure that my feelings were the same as many people making the transition from school to the work place. It was the fear of the unknown and I was wondering if I was good enough and if I knew everything that I needed to know. Well, in retrospect, I now know that those fears were in fact illogical.

I remember my first day of work at the game development company Big Blue Bubble. Going into the office, I thought to myself that I will have at least a couple days of training to help prepare me and not to worry. I was introduced to my team and the game I was working on. Then I was told that my task was to start implementing some features into the game, and I was left at my desk to work. My worse fears were realized as I had no idea where to start. It was a worse case scenario: I had no training, no orientation, and was expected to start

proving myself right away. Later, I learned that this “trial by fire” is where you either sink or swim. It actually sounds a lot worse than it is; I soon realized that I was in a room full of people with the knowledge and the motivation to help me succeed. Before five minutes had passed several people introduced themselves and offered to help. By the end of the day, I had completed the tasks set out for me and I had gained considerable knowledge while working on the job. Soon, I was given my first major problem to solve. There was a certain type of cell phone not working properly with one of our games. After running tests on the phone I discovered that there was a bug in the firmware. Problem solved without too much trouble.

Over the next sixteen months I was repeatedly given tasks that I had no idea how to complete in game titles ranging from the Nintendo DS version of “Army Men” to “Garters and Ghouls”. However, I had all of the tools necessary to learn how to do each of them. I realized pretty quickly that if you are trying to solve a problem, someone else has already solved it and posted the solution online. If the Internet failed me, the company had a library that I could use and if that didn't have the answers, there were many other people with a wealth of knowledge that would be able to help.

It didn't take long for me to figure out that a large part of my job was learning and that is really where school helped to prepare me the most. For the past 3 years I had already dealt with projects where the solution wasn't given to us, we had to find it. Western did a great job of teaching me where to find the answers that I was looking for no matter what those answers happen to be. No amount of education can teach you the solutions to every problem you face in your given field, but it can give you the basics and teach you where to find the answers to those problems.

One of the biggest changes when going from a school setting to the office is learning about professional conduct and general office etiquette. Things such as how to properly email people, Internet usage, appropriate dress code and office behaviour are all things that students may have no knowledge of. That is where Career Services and the Science Internship Program came in handy. The courses I took taught me almost everything I needed to know about office life. Also, if students have a question in regards to office etiquette, you can always contact someone from Western Career Services and ask them.

Now that I have completed my internship, I can look back and see what a success it was. I learned more about computer programming than any other time of my life and I was able to meet every challenge. I was able to learn what I needed on the job because of the skills I had acquired through my courses. I knew how to conduct myself properly before ever setting foot in Big Blue Bubble and I made a lot of friends. My worries about not knowing everything I needed to were unfounded because no one expects you to know everything. I realized that they only expect you to learn.

