# Beyond Coding

A Guide For Aspiring Developers To Learn Anything There Is To Know To Successfully Start Their Career In Tech

Simone Cuomo

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# Introduction

If you are reading this book, chances are that you are already on the right path to becoming a great developer. This book includes a collection of topics and resources that are essential for getting a job in the world of programming and progressing your career.

The book has been made not only by using my personal experiences, but it also includes feedback and suggestion from my own mentee, colleagues and friends that I have made along the way.

Software Development is a great industry and I have always been an advocate in supporting people to get into this industry, no matter their background or education. Until now I have managed to help just a few people at the time by mentoring them face to face. This book is going to provide me with the possibility to increase my reach and help even more people to get a job and start a wonderful career in tech.

The content of this been is going to cover a variety of topics. We will start by explaining how the industry is structured, the jobs titles and the languages available. We will learn how to stay up to date with new technologies, and investigate many different learning techniques that will help you progress and learn your first programming language.

Next, we will highlight some important topics which are usually overseen by self-thought developers such as Git and project management using Agile methodologies and learn their importance as you build your foundation.

By the end of the book, we will deep dive into the world of interviews, where I am going to share all my experience with interviews

and negotiation, with the hope of giving you that little extra push you need to get your first job.

Lastly, we will cover some technical advice sharing a few words on what I define as "Clean Code" and handy software needed to help you strengthen the foundation for a fruitful career.

The aim of the book is to provide you with tools, resources and the right mindset to focus your studies and effort and help you get your first job, or speed up your career progress.

It is now time to start reading and get one step closer to your dream job.

# My Story - A dream come true

Hi👋, before I share the details on how to become a Web Developer, I have to spend some time convincing you that I am the right person for this task. I have to make you believe that I am telling you the truth.

What better way to achieve this level of trust, than to write an introductory chapter, where I share my own story (like a mini autobiography), so that you can learn from first hand, that everyone can start a career in Web Development, you included!

Let me present myself, my name is Simone Cuomo also known as Zelig880. I am originally from Italy but currently live in the UK. I am currently working as a Software Architect for a consultancy company based in the US, but who knows what I am actually doing by the time you read this book.

If someone would ask me to provide a very short BIO to describe who I am, I would probably write

> *"Self-taught Software Architect, Mentor, Speaker and Writer. Passionate about all aspects of web development, with a special love for VueJs."*

You are probably asking yourself, why is this important? Well, a simple sentence like the one above, encapsulates two important features of a Web Developer, or more generally a person working in IT.

1. It clearly defines that my job is a passion and that I love it as much as I love playing tennis or building lego
2. It shows that to succeed and progress you may have to do more than just your day to day (mentoring, speaking, writing, etc..)

During my career, I have not only experienced the "change of career" myself, but I have also had a chance to interview, mentor and work with many individuals who, like me, have found themselves "unexpectedly" into the world of tech, and I have decided to write this book with the intent to share all this knowledge I have gathered to help YOU achieve your dream.

Now that you know who I am now, let's quickly jump back and see who I was many ~~years~~ century ago.

## Napoli - Many Years AGo

As I mentioned above, I am originally from Italy, more precisely Napoli. I am not going to actually write the story of my life, as this is not an autobiography, but a book on how to become a Web Developer.

Living in Napoli is not easy. It is a place where the old say from Cus D'amato is stored within the DNA:

> *"People that are born round don't die square"*

So I lived my young life looking up to successful people, knowing for a fact that I would never be able to achieve anything more than my father did. This was just the way it was, or so I thought.

Even if I knew that success or career progress was not on the table, I have still pushed myself 100% trying to perform at 101% of my possibilities.

## The Economist Dream

Since a young age, I was always certain that I would become an accountant, and have focused my studies toward this career path. Firstly I completed a diploma in Accountancy in Italy and then worked toward a degree in Swansea University to study Business Management and Economics.

Completing my studies has not been easy as I had to do so while working full time to pay the bills, but I did not mind working hard because deep inside I was certain that this WAS my vocation and that it was what I was meant to do. There are times in life when you just know when something is meant for you, and this seemed to be the right fit for me.

Shortly before finishing university, me and my girlfriend I (now wife), had the opportunity to get hold of a small little cafe without the need to invest any money in the business. Since we both had a great experience in the hospitality sector, we decided to take the business over.

We run the little firm for almost 2 years, but we both knew that this was not the right place for us, as it was too demanding, and would not allow us to travel enough to see our families.

So reluctantly (for me at least), we sold it and decided to move on.

## An Unexpected Turn Of Event

During our business venture, we have met many people and made many friends. One of them was an old acquaintance from University called Steve. Steve worked as an independent Apple Developer and I was always amazed to see how well he was doing, and how excited he was when he talked about his job.

During my latest birthday, Steve made me a present, a present that would "indirectly" change the course of my life forever. His present was a very bulky apple development book called ***iOS Programming: The Big Nerd Ranch Guide.*** I was very surprised by the present, because I did not have much exposure to tech apart from the off youtube courses and simple attempt to make a website here and there everyone else.

Steve reply is one that I quote over and over again when talking with inspiring developers:

> *You may not know yet, but I am sure that you would be a fantastic developer if you would just give it a try*

## Give It A Try... He Said

Here I am, 24 years old. soon to be without a job, having to decide what to do next in my life.

I could have easily found another job as a waiter, as I had plenty of experience by now, but I really wanted to do something greater. So I decided to try two different paths:

- ✓ Try to find a job as an accountant (or something similar)
- ✓ Get a job as a Developer

You probably expect me to tell you that I went ahead and tried to get a job as a developer as I knew that was going to be my future, but the truth is that I actually tried to get a job as an accountant, and I tried very very hard. I did more than 100 applications, modified 100 of covering letters, and in many instances even reached the interview just to be told that they took someone with more experience than me (bear in mind that we are in 2011, a few years after the crash).

Unfortunately, my dream of becoming an accountant or working in finance did not materialize.

So I went ahead with Steve plan and "Gave it a try". I searched around the internet and tried to understand what jobs were available around me in tech, and could not find anyone that would require Apple developers.

After further research, I realised that HTML, CSS and Javascript were in high demand (sorry Steve I never actually read the book), so I went and started to play around with it. I would watch free videos, try to replicate real websites, set myself challenges and re-watch for the 100 times the video about Arrays that just did not make sense. After what felt ages (actually just a few weeks of studying), I started to apply for real Junior developers roles! I did not think that I could make it, but I thought that getting experience of a real interview would really help.

Little did I know that of the 4 applications I did, 2 called me back and gave me an interview.

Long story short ( I guess you probably would like to jump to the real content of the site by now), I actually managed to get a job in the

same week! Apparently, I impressed the interviewer with my attitude on learning and the progress I made by self-learning.

> ❗ *Note: I was nowhere ready to get a job as a developer. as a few weeks of study were not enough. What really impressed the interviewer, is that during the telephone interview I was honest about what I knew and what I did not know and when I presented myself for the coding exercise he actually found out that I tried to study all the topics that I did not know during the phone interview!*

## Fast forward

That first job was not easy. What I realized with time is that usually companies that are happy to take very inexperienced to work for them, are the ones that seek very low pay and have no real structure and or process to help you grow. It is true that I really enjoyed my first position, and was extremely happy with everything I accomplished, but it is also true that I really wish and hope for a new developer to be able to join a company that has a plan for them to help them grow.

In my own experience, I was lucky to have a very good personality that helped me to keep pushing myself and always try to learn more and more. This helped me in a few months to progress and start to move on within the career ladder.

Months turned into years, and I went from a newbie who knew nothing about tech at all, to a tech lead leading over 50 developers. During this career, I have learned a lot, made many mistakes, and pushed

myself over and over, and in this book, I am going to share precisely how I achieved all this and provide you with all the tips and tricks that I have learned.

For the ones that are curious about my steps and career here is a quick timeline of my career (so far):

- ✓ 2011 - Get my first job (HTML and CSS)
- ✓ 2012 - Get my second to help create an intranet (Javascript, HTML, CSS, PHP and MySql)
- ✓ 2012 - Join a tech Start-up as the 5 developers (HTML, CSS, Javascript, C#, SQL)
- ✓ 2014 - In the same tech start-up Grow from junior dev to Mid (more of the above)
- ✓ 2015 - Own my first team (Agile, Team leadership and all of the above)
- ✓ 2016 - Publish 3 articles on the .Net Magazine!
- ✓ 2017 - Be the leader of over 50 developers (architecture, communication and all of the above)
- ✓ 2018 - Start to speak at local meetups and national conferences
- ✓ 2018 - Became the Product Lead (Specify my knowledge to a specific need)
- ✓ 2019 - Join This Dot as a consultant (public speaking, blogging, architecture, auditing)
- ✓ 2020 - Gain the title of “Software Architect” (Just a title, but a proud moment)

The timeline above is just a small snapshot of what feels like a century to me. The details are not required as I just wanted to emphasise to you

that no matter where you start and where you are now, you can easily turn it around and build a successful career.

# Determination and Consistency

In the previous chapter, we learned about my story and the steps and events that helped me reach my goal. Now it is time to start and focus on yourself and provide you with some of the information you need to succeed in the world of tech.

In this chapter, we will cover the attitude and personality shift needed to be able to achieve your dreams. During my career, I have had the chance to help many people, I gave all of them the same resources, time and information (like I am doing right now with this book), but not all of them succeeded. Today we are going to focus on what YOU need to do, to be able to make it through the finishing line.

## Personal Qualities

The first question I usually get asked at the beginning of a mentor/mentee relationship is if there is a set of specific qualities that a person would need to be able to make it. Many people like to answer this question with "You must be good at maths", "You must like to speak multiple languages" or "You need to like sudoku, or problem-solving".

I cannot deny that any of the above answers are out of context, as some of the skills necessary for development may relate to love for numbers, problem-solving or the ability to learn new languages. But that is just a small part of the full picture.

I have met many developers that hated maths and could not do simple addition without the need for a calculator, yet they were great developers. Sudoku skills is probably a very minor skill that developer share as I have never spoken about sudoku with anyone in my life, yet they are great developers, and finally, not many people speak multiple languages, yet they are fantastic programmers.

Your first take from this should be the following, do not let any single conversation or lack of specific quality ever get in front of you and your dreams (this relates to anything, not just development). The only skills that are necessary to success are Determination and Consistency

## Rome Was Not Built In A Day

I love the sentence "Rome was not built in a day"! I usually repeat it to myself when I am working on an hard lengthy problem, or when someone asks me when I will be done (usually my wife while doing some DIY). But why is this sentence important, and what does it have to do with your way to Development?

The meaning of "Rome was not built in a day", is to symbolize that good thing (a beautiful city in the case of Rome), took a long time to be built and that it would have not have been half as good if it was rushed or built quicker.

The same principles apply to your path toward development. It is not going to be simple and it is not going to be super quick either, but with determination and consistency the result will start to show up, and over time, you will be extremely proud of how far you come!

It is very catchy to find articles that state learns HTML in one day,