Expand Yourself: Gain Skills Outside of Class

Edit

October 13, 2018

You go to class, complete all of your assignments, but still you feel like you're behind in the world of technology. How can you possibly catch up with the fast pace technological innovation? While there unfortunately isn't a silver bullet that works for everyone, here are some ideas to help you gain that extra experience:

1. **Side projects are king.** Employers love seeing that you take initiative with projects and applications. Whether it's developing and launching an Amazon Alexa Skill (see more here), or making a simple website to gain some experience with React (see more here), you can gain meaningful experience simply by doing something.
2. **Get paid.** While working at the MTC cafeteria may be rewarding, you won't gain any meaningful technical experience there. There are plenty of jobs on campus or around Provo who are willing to work with you to learn new technologies. While the pay may not be astronomical, you'll be given great experience solving real-world problems and analysis. Check out studentjobs.byu.edu or check the #jobs channel on the AIS slack.
3. **Look for contests or hackathons to get involved.** Spice things up and check for competitions or challenges to test your skills. Check MLH.com for Major League hacking events or look for challenges from companies. Check out Microsoft's or IBM's national contests, or check handshake.byu.edu for some company-sponsored challenges locally on campus.
4. **Refresh your technical interview skills.** Technical interviews can be a beast for anyone, but especially for those who haven't practiced beforehand. There are several free sites that allow you to dive in and gain pressure-free experience. Choose your favorite out of HackerRank, LeetCode, or codewars and get going.
5. **One word: FreeCodeCamp.** Ever heard of Kahn Academy? FreeCodeCamp is the equivalent in the technical world. There are hours and hours of free courses from professionals ALL FOR FREE. Their courses are heavily project based so they're a great resume builder. Plenty of people have gotten full-time software development jobs simply from completing these courses. You can even get certificates that you can show on your LinkedIn profile. Check it out at www.freecodecamp.org.
6. **Come to the AIS TechTalks.** Held on the first and third Thursdays of each month, TechTalks provide you away to get exposure to new topics and ideas. Bring your laptops and follow along as speakers talk about a variety of topics, such as freelancing, React, contributing to open source, and many others throughout the semester. They're held @ 7pm in TNRB W328

By **Association for Information Systems**