An Introduction to Side-Projects

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Why do Side-Projects?

• Primary
  (1) Learn
  (2) Grow
  (3) Have fun

• Secondary
  (1) Make friends
  (2) Career development
  (3) Additional income (not always possible)
Picking a Side-Project

• **Passion** should drive you…
  - A topic you love
  - A problem that really bugs you
  - Something you just enjoy doing

• Examples
  - I love mathematics
  - Online advertisements really bug me
  - I enjoy talking about movies
How to do a Side-Project?

- Make a plan and do your research…
  - What tools and platforms can I use?
  - What apps already exist?

- Work incrementally, but dream big…
  - What can I realistically do in 4-hours? 10-hours? 100-hours?

- Ask your friends what they think…
  - Before you even start, try explaining the idea to someone else who can give kind feedback
How to get Started?

• Just do it!

• Keep with it!

• Push yourself!

• It will pay off in the end.
Work in progress...

• You have an idea or even a prototype

• How do you...
  − find real people to collaborate with?
  − share it with others?
  − get feedback?
How to meet real people?

• Consider going to a meeting or event in person or online (make sure that it’s safe)
  – Hackathons
  – School clubs and events

• There are Philadelphia events that I sometimes attend...
  – Venture Cafe (on Thursdays) – near University City
  – Entre events in Philadelphia
How to make it Shareable?

- There can be risks with sharing your project publicly

- If you accept the risks, then you can put your...
  - App on the App Store
  - Video on Youtube / Vimeo
  - Article on Medium / Make: Projects (previously called ProjectBoard)
  - Code on Bitbucket / GitHub

- Make a website
  - PythonAnywhere / AWS / GitHub / etc
  - Free resources and discounts for students (when available)
Get Feedback

• Make a survey
  – Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, etc

• Share your creation and survey with…
  – Family, Friends, Classmates, and College community
  – Share with side-project communities
    • Ex: Side-projects group on LinkedIn

• There can be risks, but I sometimes…
  – Contact people who work in this area
  – Post to relevant forums and communities
Finished

• Now what? Here are some options…
  – Feel the satisfaction of completing your project
  – Just keep making it better
  – Maximize your viewership and downloads
  – Use it to help you get a job
  – Set it down and come back to it later
Viewership & Downloads

• Again, there can be risks with making your work public

• You can…
  – Share it with people who really need it
  – Initial users, communities, or influencers might help promote it
  – (I told a few stories)

• I encourage you to be moral and follow ethical practices
  – Some people do illegal things to promote their products (I do not encourage this behavior)
Get a job

- There is a lot that goes into getting a job (experiences can vary greatly)
  - Submit Application
  - Match with what they are looking for
  - Make a personal and memorable introduction
  - Nail the interview

- How can your side-project possibly help
  - Include it on your resume
  - Tell a potential employer about it (only if you feel comfortable)
  - Some potential employers ask for code samples. I have a couple side-projects that I use specifically as code samples.
My Side-Project

- (I talked about my side-projects)

- I learned how to...
  - build a mobile friendly web app
  - setup a web server
  - use OAuth2
  - make a social media bot (followed ethical practices)
  - grow an online community
  - gain some traction
  - build a data set
Thank you very much!
(let me know if you’re working on a side-project)