I was Interviewed for an Private Newsletter

Posted At : May 12, 2020 9:00 AM | Posted By : Jeffry Houser
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I was interviewed for an internal newsletter at Disney Streaming Services. The running joke among my team is that I'm now famous. Since I don't think this includes any confidential information, I thought I'd share here. I did redact a few sentences.

What is your role at Disney Streaming and how long have you been at the company

I'm a Senior Developer on the Polaris team, and have been here for just shy of two years. I operate as the team's UI Lead, because building user interfaces is where my interests lie. It's always a challenge to try to put yourself in the mind of your users and help them do their job more effectively.

What surprised (or excited) you the most about Disney Streaming Services?

For a long time, I was a small business owner, doing custom software development for small and midsize businesses, but could not pass up the opportunity to join DSS and work on such a game changing project. I was very excited about the possibilities of my role, what Disney's Streaming Services could become, and how I could have a positive effect on it. I restructured myself to make this opportunity work. Despite some minor bumps along the road to reinvention, I love working with a team of great people to build an awesome product.

The biggest surprise did not come from within; but rather from interacting with people out in the real world. When people find out you work for Disney, you immediately make a new friend. When you tell them you are on the Disney+ team, you've just made a friend for life. People love us, and I did not realize how deep that goes!

Can you talk about the work you're doing and some of your biggest accomplishments over the last quarter?

My team has done some great things since I've been brought on, but what I'm most proud of are the smaller tasks I've taken on to help make our team more productive. Recently, I tackled our ticketing process. Writing good development story tickets is hard, and our process for capturing details was inconsistent. This often led to ambiguous requirements and incomplete tech details, sometimes causing duplicate/unnecessary work. As team lead, I made it a goal of mine to help solve this issue, and I proposed some ticketing goals and sample outlines. With this procedure in place, our tickets have become more focused and consistent, which improved efficiency in refinement, increased understanding, and reduced duplicate work.

What Disney character do you relate most to? And why?

I'm not sure who I relate to, but I most aspire to be like Pooh Bear. He is always willing to help out a friend, is ready to take on the task at hand no matter how daunting, and does not let the big stresses get him down. Plus, he is so cuddly and who doesn't love a good hug?

What's the wisest thing you have ever heard someone say?

I don't have an exact quote. I'd like to re-iterate a sentiment from the book Jump Start Your Business Brain by Doug Hall. The book talks about how being overt in your communication will help get your message across. In a world where we are being bombarded with so much information, it is tough to stand out. If you can communicate what you want clearly, and succinctly, you are more likely to be noticed and understood. A shared understanding helps all parties work together more effectively. Clear communication is more important than ever with most of us working remotely and communicating across teams.

This reminds me of a discussion I had recently with a good friend, about differences between guess culture and ask culture. In guess culture, you rely on a lot of non-verbal or passive communication. This leads to vague intents and requests being ripe for misinterpretation. In ask culture, you lay it out there bluntly and clearly with hopes of making a decision and moving forward--even if that decision is to not move forward. With most of us home, our non-verbal communication ability is further limited behind internet lag and web cam video resolution. That is why being clear and direct in our communication is the best step forward.

Final Thoughts

It is still weird for me to adjust the amount of control I gave up over my life to join this project. Although I miss being me, I consider myself lucky to be surrounded by so many great coworkers doing amazing things, especially at a company that promotes a good work life balance to their employees.