ADVENTURES OF A FREELANCE SOFTWARE DEVELOPER

by Jeremy Zerr

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HERE'S WHAT WE'LL TALK ABOUT

▸ Life as a Freelancer

▸ How Did I Get Here?

▸ Reasons to Become a Freelancer

▸ The 3 Freedoms

▸ Freelance Life Cycle

▸ Hard Things about Being a Freelancer

▸ Q & A

WHAT I DO

▸ I build custom software

▸ We create web applications, mobile apps, front to back

▸ Full time for 7 and a half years, started part time 9 years ago
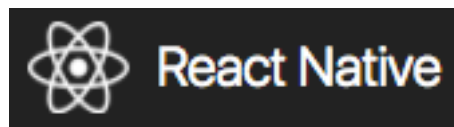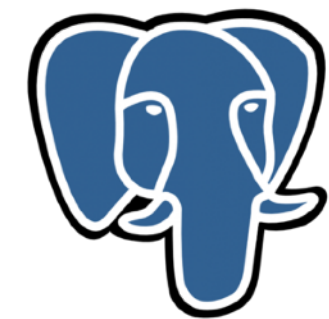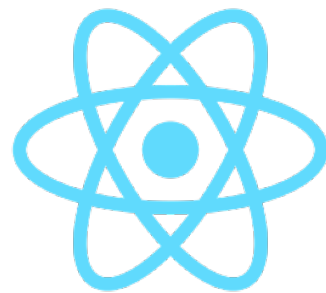
▸ We are currently a skilled team of 3
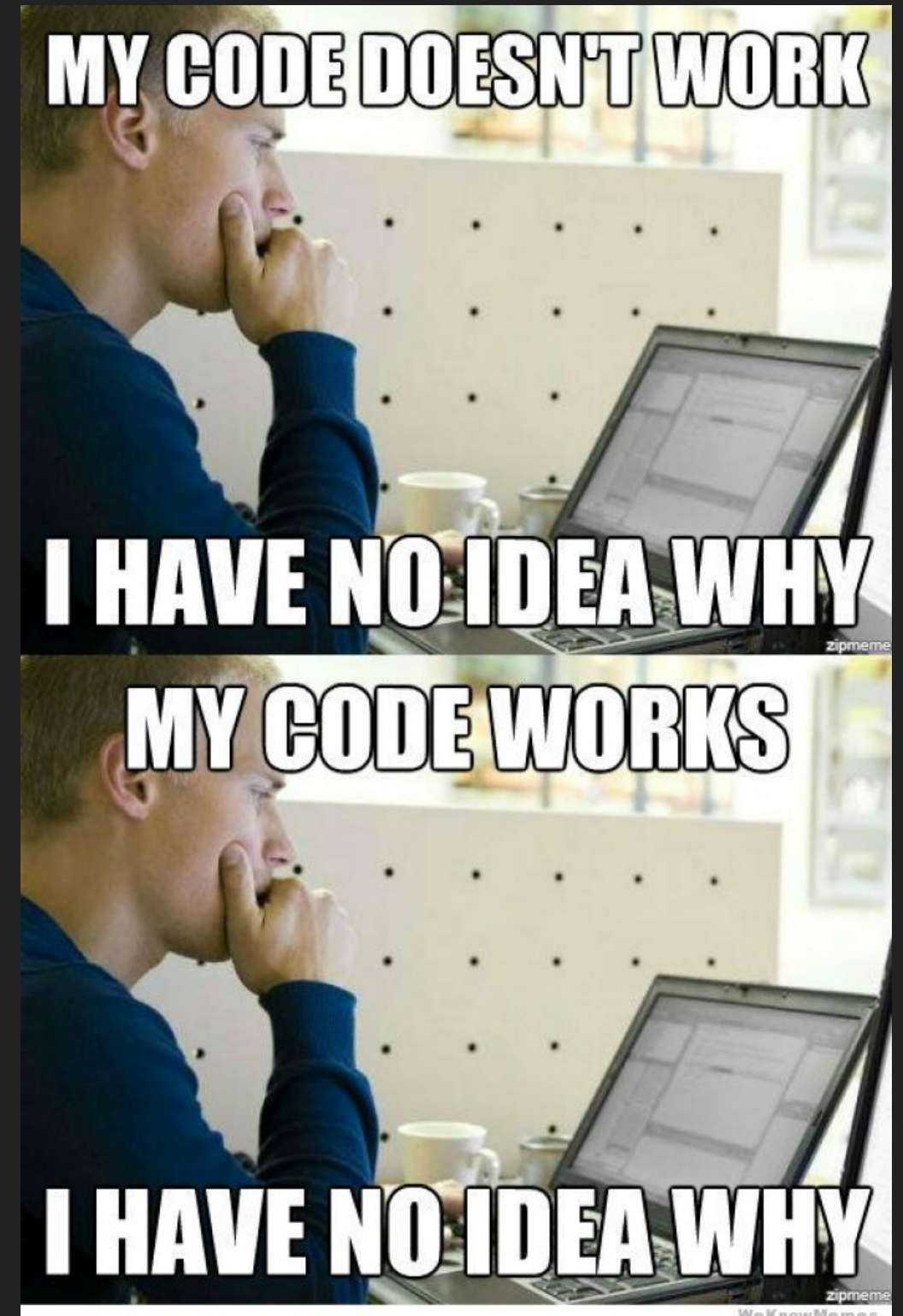
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WHO HAVE WE HELPED?

TECHNOLOGIES WE USE

WHAT EXACTLY IS MY BUSINESS

▸ Building Software Products

▸ Software Project Management

▸ Tech Strategy

▸ Training

MY PHILOSOPHY

▸ Technical Project Management

▸ Transparent process with clients

▸ Use proven frameworks, leverage open source, be efficient and productive

▸ Contribute back to the community - presentations, teaching

▸ No outsourcing

▸ Never experiment with new tech on client projects

MY EMPLOYED LIFE

▸ First job as a fresh Computer Engineer brought me to Boise and Micron

▸ Switched positions within Micron, then that department got spun off as a new company called Aptina and moved to San Jose

▸ Because of that, off to St. Luke's to move HR/Payroll processes online

▸ Ended up as a Clinical Operations Analyst creating a custom web app still being used today

MAKING THE BREAK

▸ Curiosity - Helping people make money online and building web applications

▸ Passion - No matter what my day job was, I always enjoyed and was challenged by creating web apps

▸ Risk - What is the worst that can happen?

▸ Didn't want to jump in 100% full time if I could go part-time.

▸ Don't do it in secret. Maybe somebody can help…

▸ How much money did I actually need?

▸ First few freelance projects put me from part time to full time

TOP REASONS TO BECOME A FREELANCER (FOR ME)

‣ Diversity of your skills and who you can help

‣ Getting a chance to lead projects, start to finish

‣ Develop a broad set of skills

‣ Networking

‣ Work on newer tech than at product based company

‣ The 3 Freedoms

THE 3 FREEDOMS

▸ Time

▸ Location

▸ Money

FREEDOM OF TIME

▸ Choose when you work

▸ Choose what you spend your time on

▸ Choose who you spend your time with

FREEDOM OF LOCATION

▸ Choose where you work from

▸ Choose your own tools

▸ Use whatever gear you want

▸ Can use any public services, cloud hosting, APIs

▸ Freedom to choose the best solution for the project

FREEDOM OF MONEY

▸ Why do we have to work 40 hrs/week minimum to get our pay?

▸ I always wished I could just work less hours for less pay, just enough to cover my needs

▸ I just wanted to free up time to build things that were more interesting to me

▸ Goal is to not make more, but to make more per hour, every hour you work on client projects

▸ Break Even Days

BUILD – HELP – DELIVER LOOP

▸ Building Skills

▸ Finding Projects to Help on

▸ Deliver on the Project

BUILDING SKILLS

▸ Leadership/Teamwork

▸ Planning

▸ Speaking

▸ Technical

▸ Portfolio

FINDING PROJECTS TO HELP ON

▸ Goals - How much work do you NEED

▸ Dream Client

▸ Networking - Have a purpose, help and learn

▸ Marketing Yourself - Presentations, Connecting, be a contributor not just a consumer

▸ Rates - Test and Negotiate

DELIVER ON THE PROJECT

▸ Front end - Estimates & Interviews

▸ Middle - Project management software, transparency, time tracking

▸ Back end - Invoicing & Maintenance

DELIVER – FRONTEND

▸ Harvest for estimates

▸ Interview

  ▸ Prepare, before you even talk with them, you must understand their business, their needs, their tech

  ▸ I interview them

  ▸ They interview me

  ▸ Relate to your past experiences

▸ Mockups - Balsamiq

DELIVER – MIDDLE

▸ Software project management

  ▸ Code - Github & Git Flow w/SourceTree

  ▸ Issues/tasks - Pivotal Tracker, Basecamp

  ▸ Feedback - Bugherd, Zendesk, or just directly into Pivotal Tracker

  ▸ Harvest - Time tracking

▸ Frequent releases, constant feedback, periodic updates

▸ Communication and transparency is key

DELIVER – BACKEND

▸ Invoicing - Harvest

▸ Maintenance - Warranty, hosting, followup

TRADEOFFS

▸ Discipline

▸ Bubbles of client work

▸ Last 10% of a project - Death by 1000 styles

▸ Getting first clients and portfolio pieces

▸ Taking time to invest in yourself that isn't paid

▸ Doing all the other business stuff (accounting, invoicing, taxes, insurance, contracts)

▸ Knowing what clients are a bad fit before it's too late

▸ Social life

▸ Solo coding

CAN I ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS?

▸ Clients

▸ Marketing Yourself

▸ Technologies

▸ Rates

▸ Hiring an Employee

THANKS!

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