



The Journey



Jason Goliath

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***Your Complete Guide to Becoming a
Self-Taught Python Developer By Jason
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About the Author



My life started as a coloured boy growing up as the youngest among five kids in Bloemendal, Bethelsdorp, Port Elizabeth.

I grew up in a heavily Christian household where we were taught Christian values beyond just religion. Thanks to my late mother, we were grounded by our faith, and that made us strong as kids.

My passion for IT really started during my early high school years in Standard Six. My brother and my sister's boyfriend at the time would work on computers—building them from scratch and fixing them.

At the time, Pentium 1 and 486 computers were the latest and greatest, the fastest computers available.

Back then, I would render services to my local church, help with IT at school for my friends, and support my family at home. This included working with computers, internet (dial-up), and because I was a gamer, I had developed the weird ability to type at crazy speeds.

The Dream Deferred



Keep in mind, at this point I thought that was all there was to IT. In high school, my original aspiration was to go into robotics engineering, but my marks weren't good enough. Although I had a lingering passion to code, my initial interest was robotics—I had a dream, a drive. But in the northern areas, you don't even know that coding is a thing. There are no software developers living next door. The common IT careers you get exposed to are IT support roles, and for my uneducated self, that was it.

I graduated from high school without the marks needed to pursue what I actually wanted to do: robotics engineering.

The First Steps



After school, my brother gave me an opportunity to do a small course at Boston City Campus, where I earned my A+ CompTIA certification for IT support work.

Lo and behold, I was certified but couldn't find a job right away. So I did an internship for no money, only to gain experience working at a computer store.

Here I learned how to build computers from scratch, solve day-to-day IT problems like creating network cables (crossover cables), loading Windows, and understanding the different powerhouse components of technology that build up a computer.

It was amazing to see the latest and greatest graphics cards, holding R20,000 worth of computer power in your hands.

This feeling was awesome, and I enjoyed every moment. After carefully building computers as requested by our clients, we would load the software, ensure the licensing was updated correctly, and prepare everything in a perfect package for the client to pick up later that day.

That was just the start of the journey. The feeling of fulfillment from choosing this career path and the passion for IT increased more and more each day.

The Wilderness



Years



Between jobs, here and there for five years after my internship (which lasted about one year), I couldn't find an IT gig in Port Elizabeth at the time. I mean, I literally couldn't find work.

I had to take other jobs just to generate income. I don't know—I have this need to master things, this need to learn and expand my mind.

The need to learn to play acoustic guitar, the need to join a band and grow as a musician. Ah, learning to play guitar was HARD—blue fingers, the works. They said starting on steel strings was a must... haha, I'm sure they lied. I could have just started on a classical guitar; it would have hurt less.

I think at this point it's clear that I wasn't in the habit of giving up when things got hard. I joined our local church band, and that was one of the best experiences of my life. As Christians, we live to serve as Jesus did. I also did guitar covers with my friends and family just for the fun of it.

The Breakthrough



Enough of that—back to my self-taught coding journey.

While working at a casino as a waiter and applying for jobs, I was blessed enough to be noticed by one of the guests who offered me a job. I am forever grateful to this individual because she saw potential in me and decided to take a chance.

This is where I started at a software company, and this is where my inspiration caught fire. I actually met developers and project managers—the whole ecosystem.

For the first time, I was exposed to coding. I met two developers who had actually taught themselves to code. One of them had even started his own company and was succeeding.

I would ask about this dev because I thought, "If he could do it, I can do it too." The senior dev at the time would tell me stories about how he would have thousands of tabs open as he researched everything!

I was hired to do IT support, but here my world opened to so many more possibilities.

The engineer at the time showed me how to restore the database locally if you ran into DB issues. He showed me what it meant to run Angular and npm node modules, ng serve, and the like. I started my pet project—creating a form—and he would guide me on what to do next.

We also had this legacy codebase in Delphi that I attempted to work on, but Angular resonated better with me.

This is where I got introduced to testing, and from here onwards, my testing career started.

Meeting Fellow

Travelers

I later met a good friend who also inspired me to code. He joined as an intern—the second self-taught dev I ever met.

At this point, he had done a boot camp and Udemy courses. Nevertheless, he ended up becoming an integration developer.

Both my friend and I eventually had to look for new jobs and ended up at another software company—this time, me as a tester and him as an integration developer.

Here, my mind was blown. I met amazing minds: one of my dearest friends in DevOps and another great mind, the solutions architect. I would spend coffee breaks listening to them talk about hashing algorithms. I was inspired to the core of my being.

Growing as a Tester



Starting out as a tester was hard, to be honest. Not knowing much—but of course, I quickly learned what needed to be done. Without ISTQB certification, I scoured the internet to learn more and became better at testing. Although, if I think back, I wasn't a really good tester when I started, haha.

I think testing comes with actual experience—the more you get, the better you become. So I won't count myself out just yet.

Although I was a tester, I now had friends with successful careers in development who were easy to start conversations with. As we talked, I'd research what they meant because, duh, I was lost, lol.

I think, inadvertently, as a QA, the exposure to development made me feel like I could do it. And also, having met devs who had done it before gave me hope.

Life's Greatest Joy



Moments later, I became the happiest man on earth, marrying the most amazing woman in the world, who later gave birth to our amazing son!

Happiest man alive!

Moving to Cape Town



After we married, I applied for—or commented on LinkedIn about—a job. The job poster replied and noticed that I was friends with one of his mutual connections. I had a call with him, and we had an awesome meeting. At the time, they had a position for me in Cape Town.

Yay, I got the job!

This is where my knowledge inadvertently grew more and more, working as a consultant. I was exposed to retail systems and integration systems that blew my mind. I also met automation engineers—mind you, some of them were also self-taught.

Here, I had access to courses. We had the greatest mentor of all time, Bas. We had free courses almost weekly and lunch-and-learn sessions. I must say, it started something inside me and pushed me toward learning automation. At the time, I asked him what programming language I should learn. I told him I'd like to learn Python since it's considered the easiest language for a first-time programmer.

We had Java REST Assured courses, Robot Framework automation courses—you had everything you needed, and you could ask questions without feeling like you didn't know enough.

The Hard Work Begins



At this point, I just needed to put in the work and try to code on my own. I tried going through the course content. I would retry it over and over again. It was really hard, I won't lie.

I also found some Coursera courses I took up, and the more I tried, the harder it felt. Years later, I felt like giving up. But the more impossible it felt, the more I carried on—coding along with courses. (I'll share a list of courses closer to the end of this ebook.)

By this time, my son was born, and I'd stay up nights coding or watching videos until they made sense. Years later, after persistently trying and trying, my mind started to understand functions as a starting point. I would slowly look things up or use ebooks that explained concepts like you would to a child.

The Breakthrough Moment

The thing I noticed about coding—or learning to code—is that your brain slowly adapts to patterns. If you watch the videos enough, if you practice enough, your mind submits and absorbs the information and processes it.

I started coding and adding projects to my GitHub repo. I recently started doing sanity checks with Robot Framework. After understanding one language and combining it with my experience in testing, I realized that each language has documentation. Knowing how to find information, understanding it, and then implementing it works for any language—as long as you understand OOP (Object-Oriented Programming).

If you teach yourself one language, you'll notice the only thing different between languages is syntax. Reading constantly is the key.

Learn one language, and then you can learn any other language. I find that learning an interpreted language like Python makes other languages like Java easier to understand. Languages like C# read better to my eyes without Python's indentation rules.

My Message to You



I'd like to encourage you: there is too much information on the internet NOT to be able to learn a new coding language. Take the time, read and learn. We can do anything we set our minds to. The journey from IT support to self-taught developer isn't easy, but it's possible. It took me years of persistent effort, countless late nights, and the willingness to feel lost before finding clarity. If I can do it coming from where I came from, you can too.

Key Lessons from My



Journey

- 1. Persistence beats talent - I didn't have the best marks, but I never gave up***
- 2. Exposure matters - Being around developers showed me what was possible***
- 3. Pattern recognition develops over time - Your brain adapts with practice***
- 4. One language opens all doors - Master one, and others become easier***
- 5. Community is everything - Find mentors and peers who inspire you***
- 6. Start before you're ready - I began with pet projects before I felt qualified***

Resources to Help You on Your Journey

- *Here are a few links to great reads and courses to help you with your journey:*
- *Free Coding Courses:*
 - *Learn to Code — For Free — Coding Courses for Busy People*
 - *Free Python Course by Cisco: No Prior Experience Necessary!*
- *These resources were instrumental in my journey, and they can be for yours too. Remember, the key is consistency—even 30 minutes a day adds up over time.*

Need Help on Your Tech Journey?

My story shows that the path to becoming a developer isn't always straightforward—but you don't have to walk it alone.

At Empath Technology Solutions, we understand the challenges you're facing because we've lived them. Whether you're:

A business owner needing reliable IT support or custom software solutions

An aspiring developer looking for mentorship or guidance on your learning path

A company seeking quality assurance, testing, or automation services
We're here to help you succeed.

Let's Connect

Ready to take the next step?

 Visit us: empathtechnologiesolutions.com

 Contact us: Get in touch to discuss how we can support your technology needs

 Create a ticket: Have a specific project or question? Reach out and let's find the solution together.

Your journey starts now. Take the first step—and remember, there's a community ready to support you.