On Being An Early Career Dev In Your 30s

Ben Greenberg

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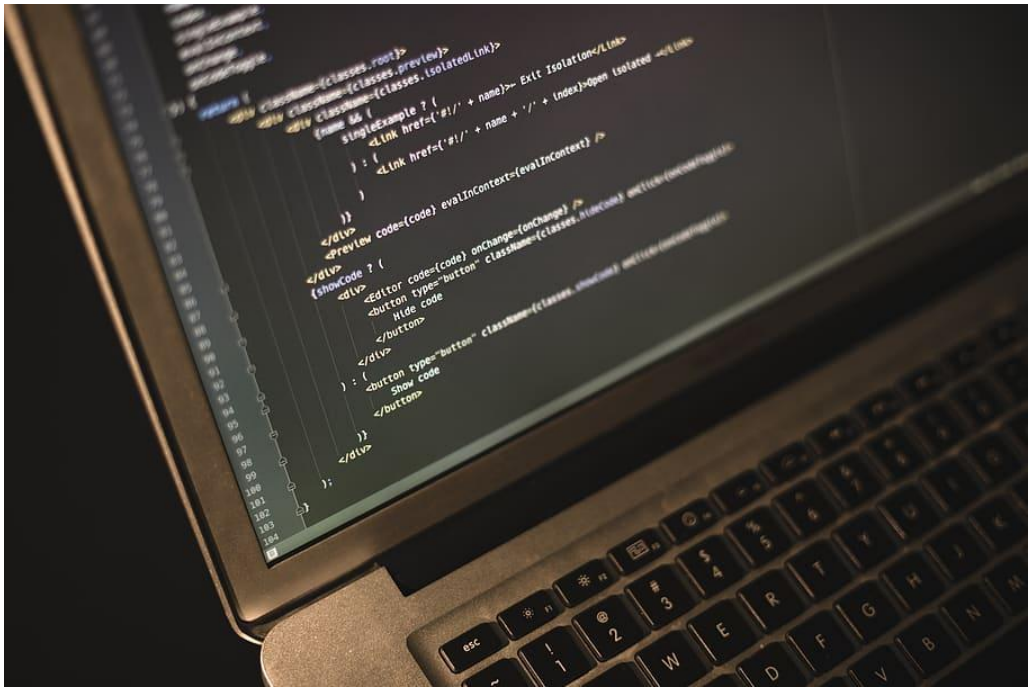
“Two roads diverged in a wood,
and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the
difference.”

- Robert Frost

From rabbi

… to developer



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The unconventional is increasingly becoming conventional

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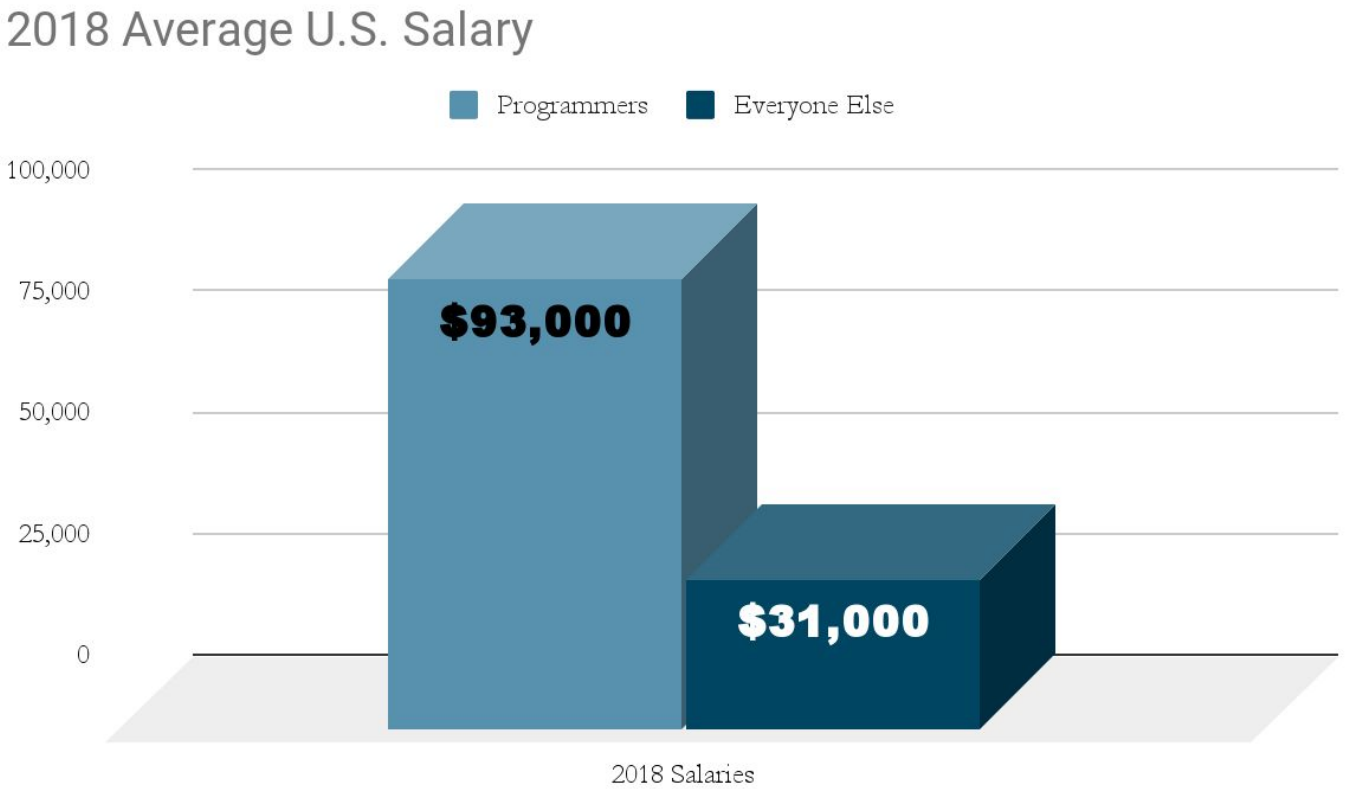
> Employees between 30 and 45 years old have had the greatest increase in resignation rates, with an average increase of more than 20% between 2020 and 2021.

- Harvard Business Review, *September 2021*

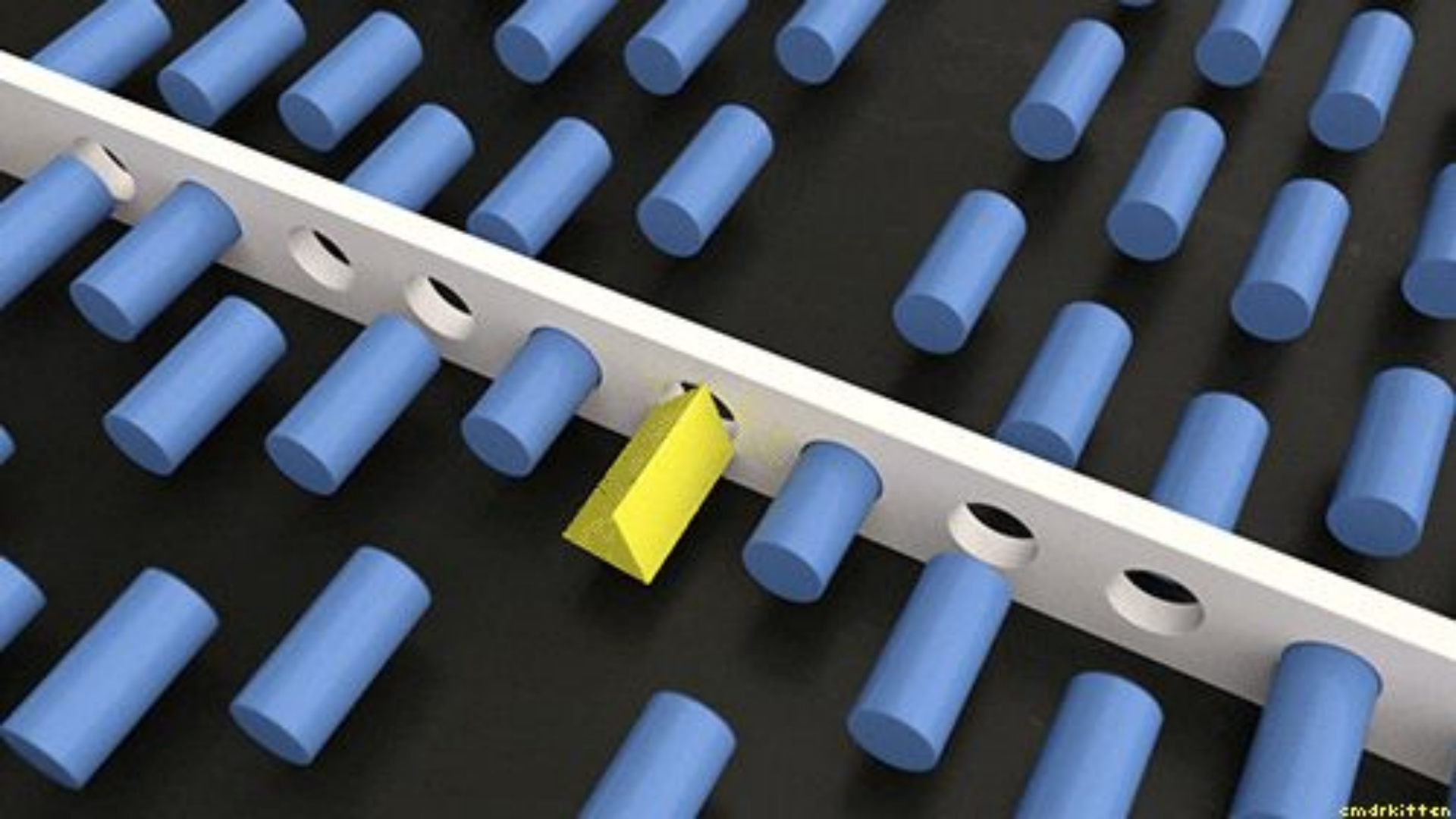
66%

of Americans are keen to switch jobs

- Business Insider, *September 2021*



- *U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics*


cmdrkitten

> “Unless someone like you care a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it’s not.”
>
> - Dr. Seuss

Potential Challenges and Opportunities:

The I.C.

"... switching careers is not without its challenges. For instance, you may take a **pay cut** or have to **deal with the weirdness of not being one of the most experienced people in the room**. In some cases, you might be **deemed overqualified**, yet for some pursuits, **your lack of experience could work against you.**"

- *Monster.com, Second Career Survey Research*

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Cooper
@CooperCodes
Me: a 37yr old career change junior software developer.
Having lunch with my 24yr old snr developer
Snr Dev
Me
2:24 PM · Sep 17, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone
507 Retweets 110 Quote Tweets 6,700 Likes

Your Experience Counts

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Your CV

Is Not

A Llabllity

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What you did, more than what you were called

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What You Were Called ⟷ What You Did

- High School English Teacher → Created individualized measurable project sprints for 30 students every quarter
- Bartender → Managed ongoing client relationships
- Member of the clergy → Managed a diverse team of paid staff and volunteer members

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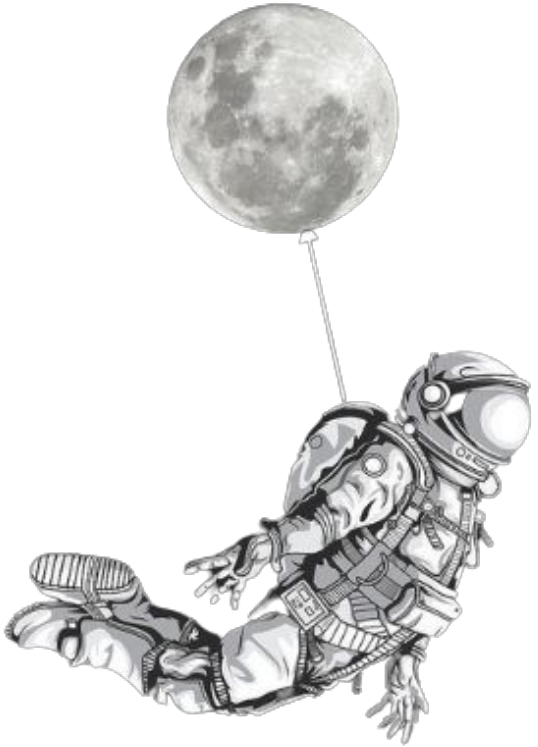
Learning to embrace humility

... while, remembering...



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Humility is not a doormat

"Keep two pieces of paper in your pocket at all times. On one: "I am a speck of dust," and on the other : "The world was created for me.""

- Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa (19th c.)

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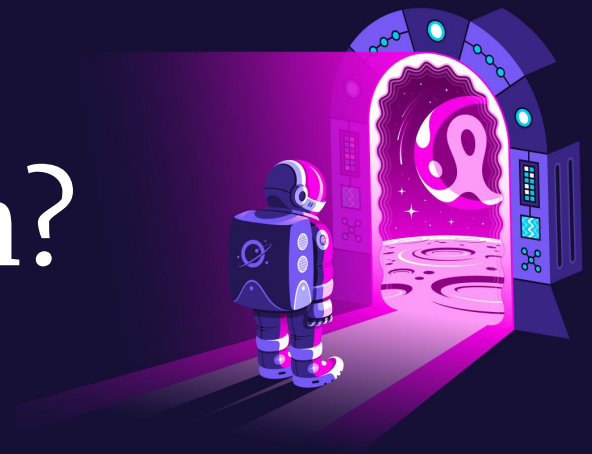
Don’t undersell yourself

What do you learn?



JavaScript?
Python? Node.js?
Rust? Elixir?
TypeScript?
Frontend?
Backend?
Full Stack?

Applying concepts > A specific language

If I stopped you on the street, and asked you to explain this in plain English...

What would you say?

```
class Person {
  constructor(name = "", age = 0) {
    this.name = name
    this.age = age
  }
}


const person = new Person("Luke Skywalker", 53)
```

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To recap

The Individual Contributor (I.C.)

- Your CV is not a liability
- What you did > What were you called
- Be humble
- Don’t be a doormat
- Applied concepts > A specific language

Potential Challenges and Opportunities:

The Manager

> It is better to **lead from behind and to put others in front**, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur...
>
> - Nelson Mandela

Servant Leadership

“If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.”

- Booker T. Washington

And remember that they often have prior experiences... All these different experiences can give you different perspectives. This allows for a far bigger pool of ideas and knowledge...

- Lisa Wagner, There's No "I" in Product Manager

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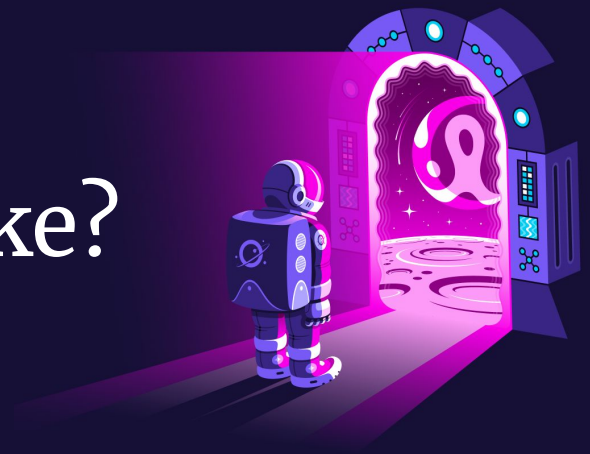
What’s your pipeline look like?



Did you start coding when you were 8 years old?

Fast forward...

Congrats! You got a job! 👏

Did you go to college?

Did you graduate with a C.S. degree?

Do you like living and sleeping in the office?

Congrats! You got a job! 👏

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The pipeline is broken

You can help fix it

What doors do you open?

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To recap

The Manager

- Servant Leadership
- A diverse team is a better team
- Ego can be obstructing
- Broaden your hiring pipeline

"He [Rabbi Tarfon] used to say: It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it."

- *Pirkei Avot 2:16*

Thank you!

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