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ESN

Entering the IT professional world

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WELCOME TO THE NEW WORLD

A world empowered by information technology

I ended my studies in information technologies with a Master degree. This degree was completed with an internship which I did in a numeric services company during 6 months. Unfortunately, there were no possibility of getting hired after the internship. So I started to seek opportunities elsewhere.

My job seeking drove me to two companies of numeric services. For the first one, I went to a recruiting session and did two interviews: one with a recruiting agent and one with the business unit head. For the second one, I had an interview with a sales engineer and another interview with the business unit head. I finally chose the one which offered the higher remuneration and which avoided me to do one week of corporate spirit training in the capital.

So in autumn 2009, I signed a contract for an international numeric services company.

The Insurance experience

Autumn 2009 - Mons En Baroeul

This was my first professional assignment. I was in middle of the creation of a team dedicated to the maintenance of a saving application. I was in a team of five people which was in a larger team of fifteen people.

To do the job, we had to be trained to the insurance business. The training was done in the customer buildings with the whole big team or by sub teams if we did not have the same training requirements. After completing the courses, there were evaluations through spreadsheets and the results of these evaluations were checked by the management.

When there were not courses, we went to our workstations and began to process maintenance tasks. I have to admit that it was difficult. The difficulty was in the information gathering. At school, the problem is exposed to you with all the necessary informations to achieve the solution. In here, you have a part of the problem and you got to fetch the explanations because you did not understand the business concepts or because you don't know which part of the system must be used. I was discovering the gap between school theory and professional practice.

One another thing I learned, is that each member of the team costs high to the customer. So, everybody has to show the value of its contribution. The problem is that when there's not a lot of tasks to achieve, proving one's part of the production is difficult. And in such circumstances, the manager decides to reduce the team. That's how my first assignment ended. It was called a workload shortage.

The Banking experience

Winter 2009 - Seclin

The agency was busy seeking me a new assignment while a director from another agency was in need of workforce for an assignment in my area. He discussed with my manager and made a deal. So me and an analyst went to complete his staff.

We had to assess a document engine tool. There were a hundred documents which had to be rewritten with a more recent version. We organized ourselves by processing half of the documents each. After seven cycles of assessment, we managed to comply with the requirements which were to produce the same output than with the previous document engine tool.

By the meanwhile, my manager found me another assignment, and with the completion of this assignment, it was just in time to switch me to another customer.

The Metallurgy experience

2010 - Dunkerque

The assignment was quite far and the agency provided me a car to commute. So, I went to the customer site and met my boss which gave me the information to make a good start.

During this assignment, I discovered the metallurgy craft. I had some ideas of it, actually a part of my school background was about material resistance and its science in an industrial context. And I have by the past visited industrial sites dealing with super-structures. Hence, I was not in an unknown universe. The customer business was to manufacture steel in different forms. But my work was not related toward the production but toward the people. I was coding the Human Resources applications.

The close-team was of five persons, each with a portfolio of application to maintain. Mine was planning, notification and other various formulars. It allows me to ramp up on development skills. At the end of this assignment, I felt better in my programming skills. I was withdrawn from the customer for internal reasons between my manager and my boss.

The Railway experience

2012 - Lille Flandres

After some time at home, time to be positioned on a new assignment, I began to work for a railway customer. It was the public sector which generally involves big budget, big team and long contract.

It was about the scheduling of reparations of the railway infrastructures. All is processed by I.T and that was at this level I was playing a role. The I.T sustaining the whole was requiring adjustments to answer to evolving requirements, and the team ,in which I was, made these adjustments. All that for the safety of the passengers of the railway company.

My work was organized by a main application where the customer was asking its new features wishes. There was the date, the name of the requester, the category: anomaly or evolution and the name of the one who was designated to realize the request. And it was the team leader who was attributing the requests.

I went on like that for a while with some changes in the team members and in the business relationships of the customer. And at the end it appeared that the business relationship between the customer and my manager became weaker due to the leaving of a team member. This team member was in the same company than I. This had repercussions and the team leader put an end to my assignment.

BUSINESS IS BUSINESS

A company do business, not charity

As I was finishing my contract with the international company, I found a job for an employer with a national network of agencies. So it was different: a different culture and a different relation with the direction. The relation was different because the company was smaller. From a ten thousands people employer I got to a two hundreds people one. In the former one there was big communication operations involving corporate responsibility. Whereas in this one, the staff was not enough larger to take care of global charity issues. It was a different feeling but a company is above all business so I signed and start a new experience with them.

The automotive client

2013 - Villers Cotterêts/ Villepinte/ Strasbourg

One of the main customers of this company was an automotive manufacturer. I did various tasks for it from the document template edition to the web portal development and also business rules adjustments.

It made me trip a lot: commuting between regions, journeys to other agencies and to the capital. This various trips were not without consequences, effectively, I lost my car during one of the commuting. It was not a car designed for the highway and it did not withstand to the frequency of the trips. The engine broke in the middle of the highway.

Concerning the trip to the agency in another region, I had to help them to go faster in their work by bringing back to the headquarters a part of the work. I met the team in their workplace, then I worked in pair with an analyst. I gathered all the informations, thanked them all and went back to the agency. Once back, I worked on it and once done, I switched of subject.

The hosted startup

2013 - Phalempin

One particularity of this company was that it hosted a startup. The goal of this emerging firm was to develop an application managing the boat waste in any port. When a boat get enter a port, it has to do various tasks. Among them there's the waste processing. This has to be handled carefully to preserve the planet.

So when my workload was not full, I took parts to development of this application. I worked on the collectors say the trucks or other machines which go fetch the waste from the boats.

The team was young and so was the atmosphere in the room. There were music, jokes, delightful team cooperation. Everyone were acting as a roommate, it was really far from the usual hierarchical relationships in traditionnal projects. Sometimes, we had gone to fast food restaurant in the mall at few kilometers till with this funny and a bit crazy ambiance.

The fate of this startup was unfortunately less joyful because the solution was sold and the team dissolved. The teammates were reassigned to other projects and I also went to other assignments.

Training

Summer 2013 - Parc de la Haute Borne of Villeneuve d'Ascq/ Lille Europe

I had the opportunity to follow two training while in this company. It was in their good practices to propose employees trainings.

The first one was a communication training. It aimed to optimize the communication. At the end of the training, the coach asked each trainee which two notions would they apply to their daily life. I chose the DESC method: Describe, Express, Suggest and Consequences. This method says that when you have a relational difficulty with someone else, you first describe it to this person, then you express what it makes you feel, then you suggest a solution to get along and finally you evoke the consequences which should lead to a better situation for both. The other notion I kept in mind was the cartography of communications situations: there are four situations. The first is minus and minus: both interlocutors do not benefit of the situation. Secondly and thirdly, there are minus and more, in these situations, one interlocutor takes advantage on the other. And finally, the best one, it is more and more where each one benefits from the situation.

The second training course was a mobility development course. I learned to design applications for smartphones. This definitely was a gift for a technical profile like mine. I then developed applications and opened an account on the online store for applications.

The poor collaboration result

Autumn 2013 - Phalempin

Nevertheless, after a year of service for this company, the balance of my activities was not outstanding. The business head looked at it and called me at his office. He said me that the results were not sufficient and told me his will to end up my contract. I had nothing to answer to him and it has conducted to a cease of the contract.

The point I always have difficulty to understand is why people around me felt so confident with permanent contracts. In here, when you have a permanent contract it is considered as unbreakable. And now with the experience of the job market, I definitely do not feel no more that way. I feel like the contract can be broken any time if the contractor do not want you anymore. And if you want to defend yourself, it will imply an effort which will compromise your professional evolution. So I acted always to minimize the impacts and to stand up back quick and well.

LIKE A FREELANCE

Rebounding till perfection

That year was the most unexpected one. I mean I did not imagine there would be so much change of directions. I exited a contract of one year to get to this chaotic series of short experiences. It had the merit to confront me to various organizations, businesses, managers and above all technologies. That is that point that I would keep as the most valuable because my technology culture became practical more than theoretical. I heard about a lot of technologies but I did not approach them in practical context.

This period was also a new way of apprehending recruitment and its less pleasant side: unemployment. I had to deal with unemployment which requires administrative reactivity.

Last but not least, I had to work abroad in front of such harsh recruiting tension in my geographical area.

The most important for me was to not loose time and to get back to work as soon as possible.

The banking experience

Winter 2013 - La Madeleine

As usual, I uploaded my resume on job boards and I answered to the recruiters calls. One of them, proposed me to start a mission for a bank. As I wanted to get back to work the sooner possible, I accepted.

Hence, I met the project manager and he told me that I would have to go to the capital agency to bring the project in his agency. So few days later, I made a trip to the capital and have gathered all the required content to start the project in the other agency. The change of agency was motivated by a rationalization of resources. From a team of full fledged developers, it led to a team of junior developers . The project was built, it was now in a sustaining phase which implies another kind of team.

The situation with this assignment was a misunderstanding between the different stakeholders. My employer thought I was on a long term assignment but the project manager and his director had agreed for only the period of the project launching. In the end, the customer affirmed his position and I exit the project and that drove to the end of my employer contractual relationship.

The retail banking experience

Spring 2014 - La Madeleine

After the exit of the previous assignment, I had to get a new employer. I put my resume on job boards and find a job. The task was to get part to a project of electronic signature in a team of ten people.

It was the first time I apply agility to project management and hopefully for me the agility coach was also a teacher in this domain. So I began in the good tracks my learning of agility project management. This way of working differentiates from the usual way of managing project by highlighting the exchanges rather than the document formalization. It is all about reactivity and close cooperation. In the daily life, there's a meeting at the beginning of the day where each teammate explains shortly what he commits to achieve on his day. The time range of project life is cut in period called 'sprint' which are concluded by a demonstration with the customer and a retrospective to improve the pitfalls encountered during the sprint. There's a also the estimation of the tasks which is done in a enticing playful way: the planning poker. Each teammate has a set of card, and after the presentation of a task to achieve, each one choose one of his card with a value print on it and submit it to everybody. The values displayed are harmonized with discussion and the task takes the agreed card value.

So I applied this new way of working till the moment of we learn that the project head committee decided to change of solution. They dropped the team I was part of to choose a packaged solution. They get to a whole specific application to a vendor ready application. They kept one or two developers and send back the others to their agencies.

The biking experience

Spring 2014 - Lille

After two weeks at the agency, the sales representative found me a new assignment. It was for a retailer which sells bikes. That was on a sport campus dedicated to the biking sport with BMX tracks, indoor fitness rooms, bike workshop, healthy food restaurant and a big selling surface for bikes and its related range of equipment.

I did a first project which was based on new technologies. The way of working was also fun, it used the agility. When the build of this project was over the customer switch me on another project. This project was less friendly: the business rules were complex, the stakeholders were not accessible and I felt alone in front of this jamming. It did not get better and I was dismissed.

Anyone could argue that I had to go to meet responsables and made them solve the situation. But I was in a complicated relationship: between me and the customer, there were two other companies.

I was employed by my employer which sold me to a company which put me in one of its customer which assigned me to its projects. So when things go wrong, everybody has a way to solve the problem and in the end, we don't know who rules. That required excellent communication skills and I was not able to par it.

The flower experience

Autumn 2014 - Roubaix

This time, it has been a bit longer to find a job. And the way I was bound to my employer was a bit complicated. Actually, I signed a contract with a company which would let me under another company contract after three months of good service. This last one sells me to another company who has a customer portfolio so it assigns me to one of its customer. If we make the total, there are four companies involved in my chain of command which makes the reporting quite heavy.

I was thereby working for a customer who's business is to sell flowers. I made a training on the product used by this customer. Initially, it was planned to send me to the product provider in Germany but after some talking with the customer managers, I trained in their buildings near my location. The training was part of e-learning, part of coaching during two weeks. The e-learning was done by following trails. A trail is self-pace course mixing practice and theory. I was with other trainees and we have a limited time window to achieve each trail. Once one was achieved, a coach went checking and answering trainees questions.

I finished the training and started to work on business tasks. The customer satisfaction was alas not fulfilled. I have some limitations in the proficiency of the technologies of the customer. The customer expected somebody completely autonomous on all parts of the project. So the customer manager put an end to my collaboration.

The international experience

Winter 2014 - Charleroi

Once again, I published my resume on job boards and interacted with recruiters. This time, it was a different kind of recruiter. I dealt with a payroll company. With this kind of recruiter, you have to find the mission and they do the administrative part, most of it is the wage handling. The reason, I used their services was because I worked in another country which implied some subtle contract knowledge.

So I went to this customer in a foreign country, and I helped them finished features before the end of the year. Actually, the budget was on its period end, that's why I joined them, to make the most of this budget.

At the end of the year, the assignment was over and I waited to its renewal. The response was taking a long time, and I was without any revenue. So I decided to seek another assignment.

COMPETITIVE SPIRIT

We are in a world of competition

It was a year with a stunning pace. After that, I needed to calm down the situation in a long assignment. But I learned that we were in a world where competition is really aggressive. While I was talking with my next employer, I realized that foreign workers are not that far. In eastern countries, people work fifteen hours a day where here we only do seven hours. And their wages are less than the quarter of what is proposed here. I listened also to the preoccupations toward the labor code which is too complex and same thing for the taxes that employers have to pay which make them less competitive. And in a larger way, it is the way of life provided by the country where it takes care of the people and provide them protection but this has a cost which slows down the country competitiveness. That's why that employer was tempted to relocate his headquarters elsewhere, in a more employer-friendly area.

Back to Railway

2015 - Lille Flandres

So after my international assignment, I was in narrow relation with its recruiter but it takes long to renew the assignment. So I agreed with him to begin to search elsewhere. I post my resume on job boards and I got an opportunity with a close beginning date. The wage was low but my unemployed status strongly encouraged me to answer cautiously. Fearing a worst situation, I gave a positive answer.

The mission was for a railway company for which I had already worked. The come back effect was kind of surprising. The first day, I met my previous manager and she seemed a bit disappointed at seeing me on the workplace. The others old acquaintances did not show any signs of disturbance.

I was on the top project of the division. It had the biggest team, surely the biggest budget and it was managed by a company of IT services from the top ten of the biggest IT companies.

This project was completing the previous project I worked on. It gave me a better understanding of the customer craft.

The mastery of agility

2015 - Lille Flandres

The corner stone of this assignment was the implementation of agility methods.

There were several project managers and a coach. The coach was there to entrust the project managers skills. Lot of the project managers were young, so advices from an experienced project manager were welcomed.

The level of the project managers make them credible in front of national standards. There's an event on agility called the "agility tour" and they went back from it with a bit deception saying that they don't really discovered new ideas.

The project management is a way for technical profile to get out of the technical path, all the project managers on this assignment had a technical background: engineering, mathematics. They embraced the world of agility and chose to continue in that path.

A team of architects

2015 - Lille Flandres

The project was so big that it required to be reviewed by technology specialists say architects.

The goals of these architects were to analyze the system, identify the pitfalls, correct them, improve the reliability and coach the developers.

The definition of an architect is kind of difficult. The lead architect defined it as a developer who has a bigger overview than an usual developer.

If we talk at the level of world standard recognition, it exists certificates which grant the title of architect to people complying with the test requirement. To get to this certificate which confers you a status of Master, you have to get by the prior statuses of associate and professional. As far as I am concerned, I obtained the associate status this year.

In common world, a graduate in information technology is able to access an architect occupation by showing success in previous relevant experiences. I would say with 10 years of successful developer background, you're at ease with the methods and your technological stack.

The team of architects were working together, each one has a group of developers to coach and a architecture subject to drive. Sometimes, they organized presentation sessions to address all the developers at the same time. There was a lead architect who was one of the core developer of the application. The two others responded two him but had their own autonomy.

To be really efficient with the developers, a convention was organized split in two days. It was a privileged time to evaluate the system. The developers were divided in groups and were asked to list all the modules of the application they know. These lists were then approved or corrected by the architects leading the convention. Then, the developers were invited, till in group, to reorder these modules in wider business part. Once theses big parts complied with the architects opinion, a road map was written and all developers committed to achieve it.

A new aspiration

2015 - Lille Flandres

This great enthusiasm around the architecture work on the application has enticed some developers' mind like mine. Originally when I started my professional track, I hoped to get to project management. For me, the steps were to get technical credibility then lead a unit of developers and finally to continue to rise the ladder of responsibilities. My vision was supported by international standards of recognition: Oracle certification for technical knowledge and PMI certification for management knowledge.

So, in this high level of technology challenges, I changed my mind. I wished to evolve in architecture with a new career track: programmer then developer then architect. This new aspiration dismissed the management dimension. And to defend my new evolution wish, I rely again on international standard: the Oracle Certifications. There are actually three certifications to get to the architect level: the associate, the professional and the master. The master level is the final stage and with it you own a recognition for dealing with architecture challenges.

This new direction fits also with my studies background. My studies had a strong technical print. There was in the early stages, hard sciences, and in the later ones engineering sciences. There was also some casual courses like English or communication but there were only there to support the core engineering courses. Hence, it was completely coherent to pursue a technical direction.

FROM IT TO DIGITAL

The IT of everyday people

I heard a lot of people speaking of digital revolution, companies in the middle of technologies of its customers equipped with smartphones, have to embrace with this new interaction opportunity. The smartphones or other connected devices are everywhere, from the schoolgirl to the grandpa. In my previous assignments, I was far from these users. I did most of the time web applications. So by joining this digital solutions editor, I got in touch with people of everyday. I had the feeling to take part to this digital revolution, to build the next generation of IT.

The furniture retailer

Spring 2016 - Tourcoing

Once in the company, I started to work for a furniture retailer. There was new features required whom the total was of 50 features. I worked with a trainee and we delivered the whole to the other team.

When you work on application, there are two families: the one which is directly accessible to the customer: the front office, and the one dealing with all the machines' processing which is hidden to the customer: the back office. On this assignment, I was on the back office. And once my job is done, it is to the front office to make the wiring to it.

That kind of organization is casual in main IT companies. The difference in this company was that the front office can be dedicated to computer interface or to mobile interface. The latter one was making the edge of the company. But that's not all, they had also a graphic and ergonomic unit.

So the 50 features were developed, then wired to front end interface and embellished by the graphic designers.

The fashion clothing retailer

Summer 2016 - Wasquehal

After completing some tasks at the agency, the heads of the agency decided to send me to work for customers. In that way, I could represent the company and settle in the customer mind the services of my employer. So I was assigned to a customer in fashion clothing.

What my manager did not know is that in my last job seeking session, I did an interview with this customer. But the mission was different. So it was kind of funny when I met the director of the service once in position. He did not appreciate the last exchanges we had. He kept in his mind that I was too eager. My contact which managed the commercial proposition apparently made a costly deal.

To tell you the truth, in my geographical area a developer in my field earns \$41000 but in the market there's many who do the job for \$30000. And if I asked the 40 grands and the sales representative adds his commission, it gets quick larger more than the 30 grands.

So I had to show humility to avoid any awkward situations. I did the job in ten days. I get back to the agency and the company heads seemed satisfied.

The real estate customer

Autumn 2016 - Wasquehal

Still in the idea of marketing their services, the head of the company sent me doing a short assignment in a real estate customer. The goal was to build an application providing services to resident of this real estate brand. There was a part in which I had light experience and the other part was my main skill. So I joined a team of fifteen developers but it appeared it was not at the best moment to begin.

The whole team just had gone back from a corporate weekend in Eastern Europe where they did games, did parties and other uproars. The atmosphere was kind of festive in the office but I adapted to it and start the tasks.

At the end of the second week, the project responsible decided to end my collaboration arguing I was slowing down the team. So I went back to the agency with this bad news and were received with strong disapprobation attitude. That leaded me to an end also with my employer.