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Tangy Frederick
Software Engineer

CAREER QUICK LOOK

Years in Field:
2 years

City/State:
Fort Lauderdale, FL

LinkedIn:
Profile

Video Clip:
Watch on YouTube

Ethnicity:
African American

School:
Broward College

Degree:
AS, Software Development; BAS Software Development 2020

Career Pathway:
Software Engineering, Entrepreneur

Personal Time:
Meditating in nature, personal growth

Other:
Founder: Cre8tive Devs Software

How did you get interested in Software Engineering? What is your background?

I used to work in the Entertainment Industry in Los Angeles as a Film Editor, then I moved over into Lead Generation Marketing. Many of my clients wanted me to build them a website to help generate leads. I had always enjoyed computers and creating, but I was very honest with them. I told them, " I have no idea how to build a website." One client replied, " Try it and if it works out, great, we'll pay you. If not, it's just a wash." So, I gave it a try and it actually went pretty well. My client liked it and it helped them sell their books, so I started building websites for my clients using WordPress—a template website builder.

At a certain point, I felt limited by the template and wanted to know what was behind it? I did some research and realized that there was a language behind it—PHP. If I could learn that language, I knew I could be more creative and translate my vision into web development.

Since I was self-taught, I decided to pursue a job as a Web Designer or Developer, so I could learn from others. Unfortunately, I couldn't make it past the interview stage because everyone wanted me to have a degree. That was when I decided to go back to school to get my degree and that's how I ended up at Broward College, where I received my AS in Software Development.

I still had difficulty finding a job after I received my AS degree, so I decided to pursue a Bachelor's and start my own company—Cre8tive Devs Software—which is almost 2 years old now.

Along the way I also wrote a book, *The Journey of a New Programmer: How to Code and Cope with Being a Newbie* to help others with absolute beginner level skills in computer programming (you can find it on Amazon).

Why did you decide to attend Broward College?

Broward was not the first school I attended for Web Development. The first college—which will remain nameless—was very expensive and the instructors sped through the course content. I wasn't learning anything, so I decided to look for another school. During this time, I attended a Code for America meeting on the Broward campus in the Computer Science Building. I was excited because of Code for America's community mission and I liked the energy of Broward. The host of the meeting Rob told me, "Yes, they have classes here," and that night I went online to look at the curriculum. I thought, "This is what I'm supposed to be learning." The meeting host also mentioned that Broward had just had a Hackathon and another would be happening in a few weeks.

When I attended the next Broward Hackathon, I met one of my mentors—Professor Michelle Levine. I was so excited to meet a female programmer—there were so many women from industry at the Hackathon. This was a huge contrast to the other school that only had one woman who was teaching at a different campus. I could see how passionate everyone at Broward was about programming and IT, and they were really there to help you.

"Another great thing about Broward College is they give students vouchers to take 3-day IT immersion Bootcamps that prepare them to sit for professional certifications at no cost to the students. I received two of my certifications that way."

Right after the Hackathon, I transferred to Broward and enrolled in the AS for Software Development, which is more than just Web Design, you are learning programming languages so you can develop your own software. At the other school, I was a Computer Networking Major because I had been discouraged from taking Programming by several instructors who said it was hard and required a lot of math. I knew at Broward I would have a community behind me and professors like Michelle Levine and Annie Meyers—Associate Dean of Information Technology and Computer Science for the Central Campus—to support me when I encountered problems along the way.

Watch Video Clip on YouTube (Click Here)

Tangy on Campus at Broward College

I finished my AS degree, then I decided to continue because I love learning about new technologies and Broward is really good as far as staying ahead of the curve on technologies. Now, I am in the Bachelor's program in Software Development.

Another great thing about Broward College is they give students vouchers to take 3-day IT Immersion Bootcamps that prepare them to sit for professional certifications at no cost to them. You also receive a voucher to actually take the exam once you've received passing scores on online pre-tests. I've received two of my certifications that way. At the other college, I would have had to pay for that myself. I would have had a lot of debt. Broward College is definitely the way to go!

Broward College is committed to much more than just teaching you the technology, they also are committed to your success in the workplace. I was required to do a 140-hour internship in Web Development for my Associate's. I did it with the Urban League of Broward County and that really, really helped me. It was there I started breaking out of my shell and with their encouragement realized I needed to build my own company. Two of my mentors are from that Urban League internship.

Can you describe the Broward Hackathons you've participated in?

The first Broward Hackathon I participated in my team won "Best Overall" for a recycling app that helps users figure out how they can recycle materials rather than throw them away. For example, if you have a door you no longer need, you get a list of things you can do to recycle it. Afterwards, I actually went through the Broward College BCex Entrepreneurship Accelerator to flesh that idea out. Once I get it to a certain point, I'm planning to see if I can re-engage my Hackathon team.

At my second Hackathon, my team also won "Best Overall" for a mobile App that helps users figure out what they are eating. For instance, someone who is visually impaired would put their camera over the food and they would have an idea about what they were about to eat. This year for my third Broward Hackathon, I really wanted to give back. I love seeing people excited, so when they asked me to be the Kickoff MC I agreed. I was also a mentor, so I stayed there overnight and helped other students with their programming and concepts.

Can you talk about your involvement with the student IT club at Broward?

Tangy and Team Taking a Hackathon Break

Tangy as Kickoff MC at Hackathon

I was the President of the Intech Club at Broward College and this helped me understand the industry as a whole. I did 2 things as president: first, I made sure all club members had digital portfolios by the end of the semester and second, that we worked together as a team to help each other achieve this. During meetings, I would ask club members "Have you ever worked with a team?" Because no one works by themselves. I wanted everyone to be able to say they had a team experience.

While you were a student at Broward, you founded your own Software Agency. Can you describe how that came about and your company?

Tangy Accepting Degree

When I was close to finishing my AS in Software Development, I applied for dozens of Web Developer jobs. When I would go to interviews, they would tell me I didn't have enough experience yet or to come back after I had my degree. I had a portfolio that showed I had actually created Apps and websites as a freelancer, but it wasn't enough. I even steered a potential client with a $30,000 project to a software company with the agreement that once they won the contract, they would hire me as a subcontractor. They won the contract but didn't include me. That was a turning point.

I already had past clients and potential new ones contacting me for work via my network, and I realized I needed to start my own company. One that would be ethical and would help a diverse group of employees flourish. I founded **Cre8tive Devs Software** with a diverse team of Software Developers—some of whom are Broward students and alumni.

What does your company do? Who are your clients?

We are a Software Engineering company that does Mobile Apps, AR Mobile Apps, fully customized websites, software for IoT and what we pride ourselves on the most is our Cybersecurity work—we specialize in Cybersecurity Penetration Testing. As an example, we are working on an Augmented Reality App that would normally require a huge budget, but we have found a way to do it on a limited budget for our client. We found a formula that works specifically for my company, so that is a big win for everyone involved. I work with a lot of small Startups and my clients are very diverse: white, black, Latino, Asian, etc.

Founder, Cre8tive Devs Software

How big is your company? What are salaries like?

We are almost 2 years old, so we have a small team: 4 main developers who are Software Engineers, a User Interface Designer, Web Support Specialist and a Cybersecurity expert. We also hire contractors and interns—some from Broward. Our team is diverse—more than half women and all ethnicities. I can't disclose company information because it's competitive; however, generally Software Engineers make $75 an hour depending on their experience, while Cybersecurity work pays more in some cases at a Startup. This varies from case to case depending on different variables. As the owner of the company, my earnings naturally will be higher. Of course, during the Startup phase the owner pays themselves peanuts in order to grow the company and to make sure that their team is in a good place. I am happy to say we are on track for meeting our profitability goals and the days of peanuts will be over soon.

What do you love about your field?

I love it. I absolutely love it. I love the entrepreneurial spirit. I love Startups. I love working on different technologies. I love the creative side. I'm glad that things unfolded in a way that made me decide to start my own company because I get bored working on one technology and one project. I like to explore. So, what do I like about it? I like the unknown aspects, I like learning, I like seeing the spark in the eyes of my clients when I take something that was just an idea, and they're actually seeing their baby come to life. So, I'm almost like a doctor delivering a baby. I like watching my Developers grow in their confidence level. I love growing things whether it's people, technologies or companies. I don't see it as work. It's interesting. So, that's why sometimes I have to tell myself, "Stop working and just relax."

What advice do you have for other women considering this career?

I would say go for it. On Slack, there's an active channel called "Women Techmakers" with women at all career levels who support each other. Join as many groups as possible, women Slack channels, Women Meetups and Tech Meetups. While you will want to connect with other women, make sure you also are connecting with those who are up on the latest technology—to get those golden nuggets—and often those groups are mostly men.

Tangy and Colleagues at Conference

Tell us what you do as the founder and Lead Software Engineer: What is a typical workday like?

My typical workdays are very long since I am building my company. I come to the office before everyone else. Mondays, I write the game plan for the week on the whiteboard. Fridays, we have our scrum meetings and plan for the next week. Mornings are spent in meetings with clients—making sure they get what they need—and with team members—serving as a resource to them on their projects. Mid-day I take a break—sometimes even a nap— and then get ready to spend the late afternoon and evening coding and/or learning new technologies. My typical day is 7 am to 11:30 pm, as I'm still in the Startup phase. The developers come in at 10:30 am and leave at 3:00 pm or 4:00 pm, then they'll do some more work from home. Developers typically work late hours and that's when they are most productive. I now work 6 days a week. I used to work 7, but I cut back when I realized I needed a day to process and reenergize and of course study for school.

Tangy and Mentor Michelle at a Women Empower Expo

What challenges have you overcome?

I think that there may be a belief that because I'm a certain gender and race that something can't be done. Whenever I think of my own journey, I think back to Madame CJ Walker. She was the first female self-made millionaire and was the daughter of ex-slaves. She did it selling hair products in 1900. This was a time when racism was in full force. I think if she could do that back then with all those things in her way, then I can definitely launch a multi-million-dollar software company now. It's a mindset.

Do you have a mentor or role model?

I have many. Michelle Levine, my professor at Broward College; Annie Meyers, Associate Dean of IT and Computer Science at the Broward Central Campus; and, Bryan Cunningham and Dalia Goldsmith from when I did an internship at the Urban League of Broward County. That was the internship that actually helped me realize that I needed to build my own company. I also think of the Marketplace as one of my mentors and most importantly, nature.

What are your future goals?

Eventually, I will become an angel investor and help other companies. I will continue to be a trailblazer and grow, learn and enjoy while helping many, many others.

Do you have any Certifications?

CIW Database Design Specialist, CIW Web Design Specialist

How do you like to spend your time off?

Meditating in nature and working on my personal growth. I love figuring out and learning more about myself.

Tangy Receiving an Award from Broward College