

Class 02: Jeff Dickey-Chaisins '81

Held: Monday, 28 January 2013

Summary: Our first visitor is Jeff Dickey-Chaisins '81. Jeff provides consulting services to job boards and other companies in the online recruiting sector, but has had a long and varied career.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.

Notes:

- Negotiating next week's visitor took longer than I expected. Anna Carey '03 will visit us via Skype. I'll put Nathalie and Kate in touch with her asap.
- For those of you who aren't seniors, the CS faculty are talking about their summer research projects this Thursday at 4:30.
- And don't forget tonight's Microsoft visit. Bring your resumes. Get free pizza.

Overview:

- Introducing Jeff Dickey-Chaisins '01
- Talk: Learning through diverse careers
- Advice for current students
- Q & A

Introducing Jeff Dickey-Chaisins '81

Jeff Dickey-Chaisins graduated from Grinnell in 1981 with a degree in English. He's had a host of jobs since then. For the past decade or more, he's lived in Grinnell, and is an active alum in the college.

I know Jeff, in part, because we have kids the same age who intersect in many classes and activities. We also volunteer for Friends of Drake Community Library together.

I remember Jeff telling me once that he was working on things with the *User Friendly* folks. (Unfortunately, none of you seem to know what User Friendly is, and that's a shame.) I've also known that Jeff has done many things vaguely related to computers. (I know much more know, but I don't want to tread on Jeff's talk.) Since he has experience talking in Doug Caulkins' learning from alumni course, I thought he'd be a good kickoff speaker for our course.

Jeff currently provides consulting services to job boards and other companies in the online recruiting sector, so I expect he'll have some useful advice on how best to present yourself.

Oh, Jeff is a Gold-Blue/Introvert.

An Outline of the Dickey-Chaisins Talk

Here's what Mr. Dickey_Chaisins sent to me

Who am I?

- 1981 grad
- English major
- Writer
- Musician
- Salesperson
- Woodworker
- Marketer
- Entrepreneur (this took a while)

What do I do now?

- Provide consulting services to job boards and other companies in the online recruiting sector

What is my so-called career path? Freelance writer for magazines Industrial coatings salesperson
Published 4 magazines, books, seminars for programmers Marketing director at job board Launched
e-learning company Marketing director at job board

What about career failures?

- Limited edition art by mail
- T-shirts for computer geeks
- Newsletter for travelers, focused on small towns

Key skills from college:

- Writing
- Persuasion
- Analysis
- No fear of technology
- Willingness to take on risk
- Intellectual curiosity

Best career advice I've ever had:

- Learn from each job. Find out what you want to do, and what you don't want to do.

Role of technology in career:

- IBM PC introduced the year I graduated
- Taught myself how to use multiple computer platforms, programs
- Sold CAD software
- Had to learn how programmers and sysadmins think; immersed myself in that world
- Had to identify which programming trends/platforms would succeed or not
 - Famously said Facebook would never go anywhere
- Engaged repeatedly in new technology â skeptically

Advice going forward:

- Keep an open mind. Donât let your background or education limit your understanding.
- Connect with others. Yes, use the technical tools like LinkedIn, but also leverage collaborative platforms like GitHub or Q&A sites like StackOverflow.
- Donât chase money (unless thatâs REALLY what you want to do). Chasing money in a job inevitably bites back. Instead, chase new experiences, learning new skills, doing cool stuff, and working with cool people.
- Be willing to take on risk. You are more able to do this now, as a recent grad, than you ever will be going forward.
- Learn from your failures and dead ends. Donât do the same dumb things over and over (again, unless you WANT to).
- Expect the unexpected. I certainly never expected to end up in Grinnell 17 years after I graduatedâbut I did.
- If you take on a 2nd or 3rd degree, make sure you understand WHY you are doing it. Donât do it because you believe you âhave to do itâ. Most likely, you donât.

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