How I became a DevOps engineer

An article I stumbled upon a few days ago, got me in a sentimental mood, the article headline was: "8 steps guide to a triumphant career transition." So, I thought to myself, maybe there is a value in recapping my own journey, because as far as I remember there was sh@#$%ot load of steps, and it was anything but triumphant.

Just before my 34th birthday, I was at a turning point in my professional life, can't really point my finger at it, but I walked with a feeling of exhaustion, not physical but more of a "what's the point" kind of exhaustion.
Don't get me wrong, by that time I was at the top of my field, and I had years of experience, successfully leading the most complicated and challenging projects at a private advanced perimeter security solutions company.
But I felt like I had hit my limit and that I wanted something more than the cozy confines of the current setting.

Being an active fellow, I naturally sprung to action, to try to understand and resolve the feelings issues.
Running through various scenarios, one thought kept crawling back on me.
Screw it all and go for something you have zero knowledge of.

And so, since it checked the zero knowledge, high-risk high-reward boxes, high-tech it was.
So I set myself for getting a high-tech job…..any high tech-job….anything high-tech related…..dish washing high-tech (no disrespect to the high-tech dishwashers) …well maybe just try me for free….you know what? I'll pay you just give me something high-tech..ish….Well you get the point.

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I started applying for high tech-related positions, took a lot…..and I mean A-LOT of courses, everything from Python programming to system and network administration to "DevOps From Zero to Hero in 8 Steps" (what is it with the 8 steps everywhere?)

I applied to over 400 companies and businesses. Let me tell you, the feeling you get from the silence that followed the 200th application and each one before and after it can only be understood by people who shared the same experience.

Nothing can bring more "joy" on a Sunday morning (and every other morning, and evening, and noon….and night) than the feeling of "Try as you might … you do not belong here."

What really got to me was not the sense of failure…although it had its moments in the sun,

But rather the feeling that no matter what I'll do, how low I am willing to go, even if I'll pay for it, I will never get a positive reaction to "Please just let me try and I'll show you who I am, and what I can do".

After about a year and a half of those cheerful career-changing activities, a conversation with a friend led me to meet Alex who just so happens to be the CEO of a small high-tech company called Tricky Tech.

I cannot stress enough what a sheer coincidence that encounter was and what role it played in unlocking the door that I had been knocking on for so long.

I cannot explain it (and neither does he) but something sensed different for me, it was like I could put into words what my resume couldn't, I could articulate more clearly the "I am dead serious about this …just give me a chance to show you".

And much to my surprise his answer to this was "You say that you are serious…it just so happens that I am serious as well. so, let's test how serious we both are… I will give an assignment, complete it, and you got your chance".

If you are wondering, the assignment was to create some procedure that copies some files between AWS GCP and AZURE … and although I banged my head around it for a few hours, eventually I got it done.

I held my end of the deal and he held his.

The journey up until now was a tough ride, but the intimidating changes that came right after I actually started were "no walk in the park" ....it was endless grinding proving myself ... starting from an absolute zero was a humble experience.

To go from a seasoned pro to a newbie in a completely another field, did not feel like "8 steps" or a "triumphant success".

Although later I was proven wrong, at the time the hardest part was thinking that having my previous knowledge had no value here, coming to terms with the fact that my experience is irrelevant and starting over from scratch is extremely, and unimaginably hard.

The first several months I went through hell and back trying to acquire the skills I needed to be productive. I went on StackOverflow, Google, Youtube, and Udemy for hours on end, learning all I could from there.

Although there was a significant learning curve, my new team provided consistent support. They gave me the direction and inspiration I required to handle the challenges of my new position.

I started to regain confidence gradually. I went from being a complete beginner to being one of the company's top DevOps engineers, and looking back today I can say with confidence that all this crazy journey, all those hours and months of learning paid off.

I feel that since I am one of the high-tech guys, I can use some Fancy CEO's quotes to make my point all the while looking smart and sassy, so here it goes:

"You cannot connect the dots looking forward, you can do it only looking back" (Steve Jobs)

All jokes aside I think nothing hits spot-on on the punchline of my story than this sentence.

Eventually, I think that my contribution was the combination of my low-tech industrial project management experience and my newly acquired DevOps knowledge.

I began using my in-depth knowledge of DevOps and project management techniques to improve processes and performance.

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My CEO gave me the opportunity to work as a DevOps project manager while I was developing, I started to realize the results of my hard work.
I was steadily catching my former role's level of confidence in the process of recovering it. Returning to a position of expertise and influence took a long time and many obstacles, but it was also quite satisfying.

Looking back, I can see that my fear was justified, and yes I know "fear should never hold us back" but the truth of the matter is that it does, and it has a huge role to play so it's better not letting it hold you back. I say get to know it and come in terms of living with it and working alongside it.

You can alter your career path at any time if you're prepared to learn new things, adjust your point of view, and put your ego aside.
It will not happen in 8 steps and probably will feel far from triumphant, but if you are serious about it, get yourself ready because you are about to be tested on how serious you really are.