

The Automation Identity Crisis:

Navigating the Jump from Scripter to Leader

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Disclaimer



My journey is not perfect, but learn from my experiences

Who am I?

Leader, engineer, nerd, runner, & dad

- Non-traditional path to get here
- Early on had an interest in coding
- Pivoted to networking
- Worked in different enterprises and became the scripter on the team
- Now I work with customers to help create solutions



def journey(scripter, leader):

My path and lessons learned

The “Hero Scripter” Phase

Next-Level: Infrastructure Phase

Leadership Pivot

Roadmap for the Modern Career

def heroScripter():

- What makes this persona unique and the drive to be the “Hero”
 - Engineers early on in a career want to feel impactful and contributing
 - Way to differentiate one’s self from others (at least when I started)
 - Let’s be honest, their’s an ego aspect to it

def heroScripter(script_examples):

- Started small and non-impactful
 - Update port descriptions based on LLDP information
 - MAC address lookup and search amongst switches
- Moved onto helping solve problems
 - Agents running native on our switches
 - Kernel route programming based on next hops from the routing table

def infrastructureShift():

- Desire to challenge and move beyond the one-off script
- How could I take my Python coding to the next level?
- Finding ways to extend our NOS and what could run on it
 - Created a web socket based html front panel interface viewer
 - Loaded Podman and dependencies to run Home Assistant on a switch
- Seemed like there was more I could do

def infrastructureShift(lab_environment):

- Why not build a virtual lab environment and infrastructure?
- How hard could this be?
 - K8s
 - Serverless functions
 - DBs
 - Virtualized labs
- Platform was great, improvement from what we had and was stable

It had one major flaw...

Beyond myself and Teren.
This wasn't built by a team

def infrastructureShift(insert_pain):

- Platform was stable, but with all code, it's prone to errors
- If problems arose, it was on me to identify and fix the problems, because it was "easier" and "faster" for myself to get it done.
- Re-Wrote an app from Python to GO (because why not!)
 - Ran it through dev for weeks, then pushed it to prod and let it ride for weeks with no issues
 - Went on Paternity leave...Corner case anyone?

def leadershipPivot():

- Careers have many different paths that you can take
 - Technical leadership
 - People leadership
- What do these have in common?

You shift your focus from what can “I do”
to
“How can I enable and grow the team”.

def leadershipPivot(growing_pains):

- Went into a leadership role, responsible for a team of engineers and outcomes
- Struggled...
 - Wasn't ready to take the hands off the keyboard
 - Not be the one to deliver an outcome
- As I was in the role, I realized that I couldn't do it all

def leadershipPivot(add_growth):

- A leader I valued gave me the opportunity to create something really Kick-ass that helped hundreds or thousands of people.
- Then I realized it was my time to do the same for the next generation of engineers.

def leadershipPivot(iterate_steps):

- I evaluated my team members and found what were their strengths and how they can thrive, then started to give each engineer an area for them to own.
- Documented and brain dumped what I knew and worked on knowledge transfers with team members.
- ***Important*** I stopped writing code! ←— This was and is hard!
- When problems arose, I paused and allowed them to stumble to come up with finding the issues. I didn't deny any asks for help, but showed them my process to problem solve
- Allowed others to own and drive the direction

def roadmapForCareer()

- It's OK to wear the "Hero Scripter" cape initially, but build that team
- Not everyone is a scripter/coder, build your team strategically
- If you don't surround yourself with a support team, Burn out is real. At first it doesn't show, but creeps up fast. Especially with family, life and priority changes
- It's ok to retire the "Hero Scripter" cape
- As you transition and allow others to own the script/app. Let them drive the direction, my advice is provide opinions when asked or if you foresee an issue with a plan.

```
if time_left == 0:  
    print("Thank you!")
```