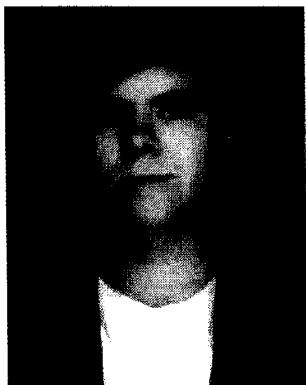


“Computer Guy” Finds New Life as BMET

BY JOSHUA COOPER

As the computer guy, I would finish a hard task repairing a customer's computer only to hear something like, “Yeah, my 12-year-old son is good with computers too.” But that's not the case as a BMET. Not once have I heard someone say that their 12-year-old son is good at rebuilding defibrillators.



Joshua Cooper

For 6 years, I worked in the Information Technology (IT) field before becoming a BMET, and I haven't regretted the decision to change careers yet.

Like most people born in the last 25 years, I grew up around computers. At 14-years-old, I had a screwdriver in hand and was adding memory to a Tandy 8088 so that it would run a little faster. Eventually, that progressed into upgrading other aspects of my computer, designing, and building my own system, then onward to networking, and the Internet. Being constantly exposed to computers in one form or another throughout my life, working on them, and keeping them running became second nature.

But the ability to fix computers, in itself, is not extraordinary.

While attending the University of Louisiana, I paid my way through college by working in telephone technical support for an Internet company. I felt challenged in trying to resolve new problems that came along.

But the challenge in this job dissipated when our mission changed and the goal was to get the customer off the phone as quickly as possible. We were educated on how to lay the blame on the modem manufacturer, the network installer, Microsoft, and any other company or entity the customer happened to mention during the course of troubleshooting. Instead of attempting to

help the end user, it became all about what we did not support.

After leaving that company, I accepted a position with a large computer consulting company. When the bottom fell out of IT, I still managed to stay in the field. But every day, work was very similar—repairing e-mail accounts, rebooting routers, and cleaning computer virus infections.

Then I had the good fortune to do some computer work for CREST Services, a Texas-based company that provides equipment and consulting management to hospitals. Three months of training later, I was an official Biomedical Equipment Technician. That sounded a lot better to me than “The Computer Guy.”

After years of working with the same problems in new packages and shinier cases, the challenge had finally come back. Once again, there was something new every day, even when all that is new that day is performing safety checks and cleaning filters on equipment.

The thing that most struck me about being a BMET is how drastically different it is from being a computer tech. If you consider the concepts behind each, they sound very similar. In some cases, like telemetry systems, bedside monitoring networks, and even radiographic film printers, having a strong IT background pays off in spades, but most of the time it doesn't.

What I have fallen back on more than anything is my electronics classes and troubleshooting abilities. Yes, anyone who can upgrade a computer knows how to swap bad boards for good ones, but how do you know which board is bad when there are 12 different boards in the device? They are very seldom color-coded like they are in a computer.

I love being a BMET because the equipment is more challenging to work on and I almost never do the same thing from one day to the next. Probably the best reason though is that the work itself is important.

Before, I was the guy who helped Mr. Smith get his e-mail working or clear his web browser history before his wife got home. Now, I am the Biomedical Equipment Technician who fixes the machine that helps Mr. Smith breathe again. ■

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