Kyle Shevlin: Hey everyone! Welcome to another episode of Second Career Devs. I'm your host, Pastor-turned-programmer, Kyle Shevlin. Second Career Devs is a podcast that shares the stories of people who have changed their lives by changing their careers to software engineering or web development. Or as I like to say, it's about the roads less traveled and the lessons learned along the way. This week, I'm joined by my good friend Jamon Holmgren, a construction worker and home designer turned software engineer and business owner. Hey Jamon.

Jamon Holmgren: Hey Kyle!

Kyle Shevlin: How's it going?

Jamon Holmgren: It's going really well. How are you?

Kyle Shevlin: I'm doing well. I'm glad that we were finally able to make this happen. Might have been a bit faster if I'd just hopped across the river, and joined you at your house, and recorded this live. I'm so glad that we can get you on the show, and introduce you to our audience, and have them hear your story. So without any further ado, do you mind telling the Second Career Dev audience who you are, and what you do, and what you did?

Jamon Holmgren: Absolutely. So my name is Jamon Holmgren. I am one of the owners of Infinite Red, which is a consultancy, both web and mobile. Mostly React and React Native. We do both design and development. And I am CTO there, as well as, as I said, one of the owners.

Kyle Shevlin: Nice. That's awesome. In fact, I'm gonna plug it right now for everyone. If you haven't had a chance, go find Infinite Red's podcast, Building Infinite Red. It's really excellent. Talks about all sorts of things that they're doing over there. It's great. I highly recommend it.

Jamon Holmgren: I appreciate that a lot. Yeah, we did season one earlier this year, and we're still planning season two. It'll probably end up being sometime in Q1, Q2 of next year.

Kyle Shevlin: That's awesome. I'll be sure to have that in the show notes. Why don't you tell our listeners, though, what was your previous career?

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah, so my previous career was essentially construction. I did a number of different jobs in construction. My dad actually owned an excavation company. So I grew up around it. It was something that I remember as a kid, riding on a backhoe, if people know what a backhoe is, like a rubber tired back hoe. Not with tracks, but actually had tires. And we would drive down the road, because my dad would be driving to another job, and doing another excavation job. So this was me as a kid. I grew up around it, and that was something that was a natural thing to slide into as I got a little older.

Kyle Shevlin: Interesting. So it's kind of the family business, is doing construction.

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah, it was for quite a while. My dad actually is a pastor now. That's something I know Kyle, you have had some experience with.

Kyle Shevlin: Little bit.

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah, he sold his excavation company back in, I wanna say around 2000. 1999. Somewhere in there. But yeah, during the summers, my dad would ask me to come with him. I would be 15-16 year old or something, and he'd have me come out with him, and he'd hand me a shovel. And I would go down in the ditch and, "Hey, this pipe here, we need to make sure that it's got dirt around it before we dump it in with the big equipment." So I started out on the business end of a shovel. And I did quite a bit of that. And then, as time went on, then my dad would start to trust me a little bit more running the machinery. I would start with smaller machinery and then graduate to a little bigger stuff. And before too long, every summer I would be sitting on, sometimes a tract excavator, or a bulldozer, or something like that. And I did the math, I figure I probably have around 1,000 hours running some sort of equipment over the course of about three or four years.

Kyle Shevlin: Three or four years doing equipment. How many years total do you think you did construction?

Jamon Holmgren: Well, after I worked for my dad, I actually then moved on to other types of construction. So I did that for, I would say about three years. And that was during high school. But then he sold the business, so I went and got a job doing framing. So this is residential homes. I would mostly pack lumber, because I was kinda new to it, so I would grab a whole bunch of plywood, or studs, or whatever else, and bring them upstairs for the other framers, who were building walls and floors and things like that.

Kyle Shevlin: You were muscle.

Jamon Holmgren: I was. I was the muscle. And it was challenging. It was fun, especially during the summer when you could just ... Summers around here in the Pacific Northwest, as you know, are really beautiful. It was fun. Got a really good tan, and it was just great. Then, as time went on, then I got a little more responsibility, and eventually ended up working in the office for a home builder.

Kyle Shevlin: Oh.

Jamon Holmgren: So that was another transition that I made. And that was the start of moving toward what I do now.

Kyle Shevlin: Interesting. So you made a transition from working onsite to working in the office. What were you doing in the office?

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah, so I actually started doing design. And by design, I mean actually designing homes. I started off, I was taught by the person who had hired me. He was a designer who'd been working for many years, and he showed me how to, initially, just make changes. In a lot of ways, it's like when you first get into a code base. These were already existing designs for subdivision homes. And people would come and say, "Hey, I like this house, but can we customize it? Can we make a few changes here and there?"

Kyle Shevlin: The WordPress templates of house design.

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah. That's exactly right. And so I would be the one in there moving the bathroom wall over six inches, or switching a door swing to a different side. Or whatever it might be. And it was a really interesting way for me to dip my feet into the whole process. But then, eventually, got to the point where I did design a few homes myself, starting from scratch. Which was a bit of a change. And then when I decided ... I know we're gonna be talking a little bit more about this. When I decided to start my own business, I ended up actually doing that still for a little while afterward, before I switched over to code.

Kyle Shevlin: Interesting. Yeah, I think you posted a tweet recently about a home you were particularly proud of.

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah. So I got a chance to do a bunch of design on a house for, at the time it was the Portland Trailblazers General Manager. So an NBA Team and the guy who essentially, I don't know if you know ... Obviously, you know sports pretty well, Kyle, but for your audience, General Manager essentially makes decisions on personnel. They'll sign players and they'll-

Kyle Shevlin: They'll fire players.

Jamon Holmgren: Fire players. And they'll trade players with other teams. So they're kind of a big wig there. And this guy had taken over the team. And I knew who he was, 'cause I was a Portland Trailblazers fan, still am. And I got this call, and it was a builder who was new to town. And he said, "Hey I don't know any designers. I'd like to meet you, see if this is something that you can do." And so I actually went down there. It was a Lake Oswego, south of Portland. And went down there. I had no idea who it was. He wouldn't tell me at the time, until he met me. And so we talked and went through what he was trying to do with the house. It was a very old house that had a lot of issues.

Jamon Holmgren: And he explains this vast idea, and I start getting an idea that maybe this customer that he's got is somewhat wealthy. It's a pretty big change.

Kyle Shevlin: I mean, it's Lake Oswego.

Jamon Holmgren: It is, yeah. Lake Oswego's known for being the rich end of town. So I started working on it. And I finally got a chance to meet the guy. He was very cool to

work with. And I worked on that for over a year. It was a really good project to work on. It was very, very different. I was doing a lot of 3D modeling, and I posted a bunch of that stuff on Twitter. You could probably put the link to the thread in your show notes so people could see some of the pictures and stuff that I did.

Kyle Shevlin: Will do. Very interesting. So you redesign, or you make a house, for General Manager of the Portland Trailblazers. That seems like it could have been a springboard to doing more house design. How did it end up, instead of doing a career of house design and maybe ending up on HGTV or something like ... instead, you end up on Twitter and various podcasts as a programmer. What started to make that change for you?

Jamon Holmgren: That's a very excellent question. And I think that I have to bring you all back to what the time period was, at the time. So this was 2008, 2009. And during that time ... Actually I guess it probably started in 2007. So during that time, we had had the housing boom, that's why I was hired to go to the home builder. They were growing rapidly. They were adding people. I think I was the 12th person added to their team. And when I quit to start my business, I think I was one of 50. So it was a huge period of growth in just a few years.

Jamon Holmgren: But then in 2008, 2009, the housing market really came tumbling down. And there was a huge crash. There was a glut of homes on the market. I remember talking to other friends that I had at the time, and they were having trouble paying their mortgage, and they were doing short sales, and there were foreclosures. It was just a really rough time. And being in the home design business, I was able to get by on remodels for a while, but even then, the banks started tightening down on loans. So people could not get home equity out of their home and do that type of thing.

Jamon Holmgren: So essentially, the work really dried up. And I had a young son and was newly married. And I needed to pay the bills, and so, for me, there was definitely a forcing mechanism there. It did feel, at the time, that maybe this could have been something else, but the timing was just really, really wrong for me.

Kyle Shevlin: That's interesting, because it's like you're recognizing something I think we don't often talk about or discuss. But just the arbitrariness of where we exist in, essentially, history.

Jamon Holmgren: Right.

Kyle Shevlin: And what careers come from that. Like, if you were ten years older and had started ten years earlier in the 90s, when we had such an economic growth, throughout that decade, essentially. Who know? You could have been such an established house designer by then that you would have just taken a couple years vacation and come back during this new boom in the market. That's really interesting.

Jamon Holmgren: Absolutely. Yeah, no, you're totally right. And despite my best efforts, and despite the, I think, good work that I was doing at the time, it didn't really matter. The market changed and I was swept along with that. And I spent a few days feeling sorry for myself. Like, I don't have any work, and nobody's calling me, and what do I do? And eventually, I was like, this isn't gonna pay the bills, I gotta get out there and do something.

Jamon Holmgren: And what's funny is it never really occurred to me at that point to go work for someone.

Kyle Shevlin: Right.

Jamon Holmgren: I don't know what it is, maybe it's just an entrepreneurial mindset that I have, maybe that I got from my dad. But I essentially thought, well, I'm gonna go knock on doors. And I literally did that. I went from office to office in strip malls and various ... I'd go into any office that I could find and drop off a card. Just a bunch of business cards. And at that time, I had started to build a few websites. And so this is where the transition to my tech career started in 2004. So this is even before I started my business, I was starting to dabble with websites, just on the side.

Jamon Holmgren: I had always loved coding. I started coding when I was 12. But hadn't really considered it as a career. So here at this time, there was an explosive growth of the Internet at that time. And so here there was definitely a big implosion of my primary industry, but right alongside me I'm watching this other industry rise up. And that was the Internet, that was the websites. And so that's where I would drop off my card, and I would say, "I do design. I do home design, and I also do website design." Which seems a little bit comical when I think about it now. But that's what I would say. I do design. I do both of these types of design.

Kyle Shevlin: I dunno. I just think it sounds confident. Like, I'm so good at design, it doesn't matter what it is. Hire me.

Jamon Holmgren: Maybe. Yeah. It sort of worked. I got a few jobs. Enough to pay the bills. And then I had to figure out how to do them. That was a whole 'nother thing.

Kyle Shevlin: Yeah. This is really interesting. And something I've really appreciated about you, Jamon. You somehow missed the idea of going and working for someone else. Building up your web development career that way. Instead, you jumped directly into literally going door-to-door like you said. But you jumped into creating your own business.

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah.

Kyle Shevlin: Do you really just have no idea why that is? Do you think it's just in your blood? That's such an interesting choice.

Jamon Holmgren: It really is, because the home builder treated me very well. They were a great company to work for. They had a great culture. They were very ... they still are. In fact, my office, I actually rent from them. My office is still in their office. Their bigger office. And they're really great people. So it was never anything against them. It was just, I had this itch - is the only way to really describe it - to go and try and do something myself.

Jamon Holmgren: I guess partly because I'm an independent person, I like agency. I like control over my life. I like to be able to make decisions and then just roll with it. I really have a tough time, and this can actually become a little bit of a personality flaw in some ways, where I have a tough time when I feel stymied. And I like to have wide-open green

                   PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:16:04]

Jamon Holmgren: And I like to sort of have wide open green field in front of me. And the easiest way to do that was to start my own business. And yeah, no I really didn't consider going to work for someone, not until much later, and that's something that I've talked about in the past, that kind of led to later, some other decisions like the merger with Infinite Red. But that was 10 years into it. I had already been doing my business for 10 years.

Jamon Holmgren: So at that point, it was, you know, I had a good job, but then I told them, "You know what? I've got to go do my own thing. I'm going to start doing some home design." And I had a few customers lined up. And that was the initial part, but then I quit my business ... Or, sorry, I started my business in 2005, and then the market crashed. I was doing a few websites here and there, and then after the market crashed, I actually went and did pretty much full time websites.

Kyle Shevlin: Gotcha, gotcha. So, you started dabbling in websites on the side in 2005, and then you go full bore essentially during the housing crisis.

Jamon Holmgren: Right.

Kyle Shevlin: What kind of things were you working on web-wise in those days? Because I'm like thinking in my head that that was about the time, if I'm correct, like Ruby on Rails hit the world. And if I'm not mistaken, I think you spent some time kind of in that world?

Jamon Holmgren: That's right. But it did take me a little while to get there. So, I started by building websites for these little construction companies that were struggling and trying to find ways to drum up work. And so, I would actually build ... And mainly in PHP, because that's what I knew. I literally, the first time I sold a website, I went, and on the way home I stopped at Barnes & Noble, which, for those of you that don't know, that was like a physical store you bought books at.

Kyle Shevlin: Before Amazon.

Jamon Holmgren:	Before Amazon, right. And I actually stopped and got like a PHP, MySQL and JavaScript book.
Kyle Shevlin:	Nice.
Jamon Holmgren:	And that was my first exposure to those languages. And I just sat down and read them, and I tried the examples, and then I actually did the project and got paid for it. A ridiculously small sum, it was probably under $1000, but it was something just to kind of pay for my materials, and get to learn what it was all about.
Jamon Holmgren:	So I was using PHP, and I actually didn't actually move into Ruby on Rails until probably 2010 or 2011. So I was a little bit later to the game. I had heard about it, but it just didn't really fit what I was doing at the time, because that was more for web applications, and I was doing more small business websites.
Kyle Shevlin:	Sure.
Jamon Holmgren:	But then later, we started getting people asking us to build more and more complex things, and PHP started becoming a thorn in my side, so we moved to Rails.
Kyle Shevlin:	Nice. So, you moved to Rails, and at this time, you haven't said the name yet, but you had a company at this time, right? Like, you were hiring a bunch of juniors. I'd love for you to describe this first company that you had, and what you were kind of doing.
Jamon Holmgren:	Yeah. So, I called it Clear Sight. I don't really know why, it was just a name that came to me at the time, and I needed a name. But it was named Clear Sight, and I ran it by myself, doing, like I said, home design and a little bit of web, until 2009, and then I started getting enough web work that I hired a couple of employees, one of which is still with me today. That's Kevin VanGelder. You know him, Kyle.
Kyle Shevlin:	Yeah.
Jamon Holmgren:	He's been with me since way back then. So that was a learning experience. Kevin was brand new. So was the other person, and it was a process, then, for me to switch from doing things mode, to being kind of teacher and mentor mode. And I actually literally would stand there at the white board and say "So, this is what an array is, and this is why you would use an array," and things like that.
Kyle Shevlin:	I laugh, but you have to learn that at some point. I shouldn't laugh at all.
Jamon Holmgren:	You do. No, it's totally ... And actually, that was ... Some of my fondest memories was teaching juniors at that level. And we would have a project that

we needed to get done, and I had to teach them how to do it, and then we would work on it together.

Kyle Shevlin: That's awesome.

Jamon Holmgren: And that was essentially my business model. I would hire pretty new developers, and then I would be the quote unquote senior, even though I was pretty new to it as well. And I would teach them, and we would get it done.

Jamon Holmgren: But yeah, that was all the way through, and then we had some technology shifts, certainly with Ruby on Rails, and then later getting into mobile, that were pretty challenging. And I had to kind of push myself to always be on the leading edge of things.

Kyle Shevlin: Yeah. I think we've talked about this personally. If you haven't gathered, audience, Jamon and I are friends in real life as well. But I believe at this time in your life and career, you are starting to ... You said getting into mobile. And I believe that kind of made a big impact on the direction your career and your business started to take. Because didn't this kind of get you involved in open source in a bunch of ways?

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah, totally. So up to that point, I hadn't really been involved in open source. I had one employee come to me and say "Hey, we should open source this framework that we've been using internally." It was a PHP framework. And I was like "Why would we do that?" You know, that doesn't make sense. And I just didn't understand at the time.

Jamon Holmgren: But then we started getting into Ruby on Rails, and I started using open source libraries in the Rails ecosystem, and I got it. I understood. Okay, this makes sense. But, it wasn't until we started doing native mobile apps, there was a system that came out in 2012 called Ruby Motion, that allowed us to build native mobile apps using Ruby, which was very cool, because I got to use a language that I already knew. Didn't have as much of a learning curve, but then I learned like the code touch APIs and was able to actually build iPhone and iPad apps.

Jamon Holmgren: And I built ... Because I was learning this, and I had a bunch of juniors, you know, this kind of all ties together. I needed a way for them to be productive in this new system. So I built a library called Pro Motion. Now, Apple has an API now called Pro Motion that is unrelated, but at the time, they didn't.

Jamon Holmgren: And I called this Pro Motion, and what it did was it essentially gave very simple API, like instead of saying view controller.push ... Or, I guess it would be nevcontroller.push view controller.animated, or something like that. Very long APIs. It was just open, and then the name of the string, ah, the screen.

Kyle Shevlin: Nice.

Jamon Holmgren: So people looked at that and said, "Oh, if I want to open a screen, I just say open. Open whatever the name of the screen is." And it was very easy. And that kind of got me on the radar. It popped up on Hacker News, which was a kind of exciting moment for me, to see it up there on the front page of Hacker News. I think it got up to like number four, or something.

Kyle Shevlin: Nice.

Jamon Holmgren: And yeah, and then a bunch of people followed me on Twitter and on GetOv, and that was my introduction to the broader community. And then I met Gant Laborde first, who I think you know, Kyle?

Kyle Shevlin: I do know Gant. In fact, him and Jason Lengstorf from Gatsby, as we are recording this, are making a ridiculous app to tell the difference between Jason and I via like some kind of photo capture machine learning thing. So, I might even have to add that in the show notes.

Jamon Holmgren: You do, and that is such a Gant Laborde thing. He's fun to work with, he works with me now. But he was the guy to kind of welcome me in to the open source community, with my library, and he had his own. And then I also met my eventual two business partners, Todd and Ken, down at a conference that I spoke at. So that opened the door to speaking at conferences, and all of the other things that kind of came with it.

Jamon Holmgren: So you can kind of see how a lot of the things kind of built on themselves all the way through, all the way back to what I was doing prior to tech.

Kyle Shevlin: Right. I won't ask you too many questions about the actual merger of Clear Sight and Infinite Red, because I'll promote your own podcast. You can find it in Season One. They talk about it. And I do think it's an interesting story to listen to, especially if you have any entrepreneurial ideas or inklings to do in your own career. So go check that out.

Kyle Shevlin: But, you know, you formed this new company, you're working as CTO, and I think you've been a COO, if I'm not mistaken, at points in your career.

Jamon Holmgren: That's right.

Kyle Shevlin: At Infinite Red. I want to start to tie these things together. So, you've had these two careers. How do you see like construction as having impacted your work as a programmer and as a designer?

Jamon Holmgren: I think it has had a major impact. Having stood out in the rain with carrying 100 pounds of plywood up the stairs, and try not to trip over power cords and things like that, it certainly gives me an appreciation for the flexibility and sort of relative ease, from a physical standpoint, of what we do. And it also, it kind of ... I guess it has connected me to the physical world in a big way, because we were

building homes and actually making physical things out there, where so many of the things we build today are just digital. They live in a hard drive and it's not as tangible.

Jamon Holmgren: So I think in that way it was helpful, as well. But yeah, I think just an appreciation for what we have. I guess a positive appreciation for this industry. It has its challenges, as you and I have talked about. It's got its downsides. But I'll take it over what I used to do. That was ... It was fun, but very demanding, and in some cases it was kind of miserable.

Kyle Shevlin: Sure. Do you ever miss working outside?

Jamon Holmgren: I do, yeah. I mean, especially during the summer.

Kyle Shevlin: It's beautiful up here.

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah, absolutely. That's the part I think that I miss the most. As well as, you know, now I have to go to a gym to try to stay in shape, where I was way more in shape before.

Kyle Shevlin: I think we were all more in shape before we sat at a computer for 40 to 60 hours a week.

Jamon Holmgren: Exactly. And I do also miss sitting on construction, like excavation equipment, because there's a part of that that's kind of fun, because you can kind of let your mind wander, and you're just sort of ... You know, you're pushing dirt, or you're bailing dirt, or whatever. That's ... There's something about that. But I think that over time I would end up getting bored, and I would end up getting ... I wouldn't be as challenged as I want to be.

Kyle Shevlin: Sure. That makes sense. I'm curious. How does, like working on an actual home, building it piece by piece, how does that correlate process-wise to working on software? I think you've made some tweets about this in the past, that I think had some curious insights to people who maybe don't know either construction, or know even software development that well.

Jamon Holmgren: There's a number of different ways that you can draw parallels. One is that there is a very close correlation between the design of a home and the design of software. And then, the actual construction of a home and the programming, the coding of software. Because when you're doing the design for a home, as I used to do, you kind of start from a blank slate. You look at what are ... You know, how many cars you think you need in your garage? How many bedrooms are you going to need? What are some of the things that, for your day to day life, you want to be able to do?

Jamon Holmgren: You know, you want the laundry room close to, you know, whatever. You want the ... You need a particular other room for maybe a home office or something

like that. This is stuff that I had to do when I was building my own home, as well. And these correlate very closely to what are the user requirements? How do they use the software? How do they get around? What's the proximity of this screen to that screen? How quickly can you get between them?

Jamon Holmgren: And then are also constraints, and often budget is one of the big ones. You may design a home that's 4000 square feet, but your budget says you get a 1500 square foot house, and certainly with software it's very similar, where the more you design the more you have to build, the more it's going to cost.

Jamon Holmgren: I also don't think people realize how much, during the process of building a home, how many decisions are made by the construction people themselves. Because not everything is designed. There are situations where the designers did not think about what might happen.

Jamon Holmgren: Here's an example. I designed a home once, and then when the framers were building it, I actually went ... Stopped by to see how things were going. They said "Oh, yeah, everything is going really well, except for you forgot to give us a way to bring the ducting upstairs. There's no possible way to do that." And they had to do something strange to get the duct work to work properly. And I was kind of embarrassed by that.

Jamon Holmgren: But it was one of those things where they had to make a decision on the fly, just like the programmers have to do when they get a design. It doesn't always take into account every state, or every potential situation that a user might get into.

Jamon Holmgren: So there are definitely a lot of parallels, I would say, along the design and the development, as well as on the construction side of things. I think that that's the primary thing. You know, I've talked about other parallels as well, but it is striking to me, to see how much of the process can be very similar between the two industries.

Kyle Shevlin: Yeah, that's totally interesting. I really like your point about, like you have ambition for X amount, but really, your budget only allows Y amount. You know, I think sometimes, especially as engineers, who don't often think about scope other than it continues to creep, like we have these ambitions. Like, how many times have you said to yourself "Oh, I can build that in a weekend." And a year later, you still haven't even initiated that side project, or something like that. I think that's really interesting.

Kyle Shevlin: I would love to kind of circle back in a unique way, too, though. You know, we've kind of talked about how construction applies to being a dev, and doing programming. But you, you're also a business owner and a business person. Is there anything from construction that like informs and impacts the way you run your business, or just act as a leader for the people that work under you?

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah, I think it did impact me, especially early on. A lot of my sort of models for success with business were construction owners, or construction company owners, so I would talk to them and get advice from them. And they may own a company that pours concrete, or something, but there are some sort of business principles that ...

PART 2 OF 3 ENDS [00:32:04]

Jamon Holmgren: ... some, you know, sort of business principles that transcend across industries. I would talk to them about what do I need to do as far as how do you handle employees, how do you handle maybe clients who are threatening to sue you or something like that? These are all thoughts I had, like what if this happens? I got good advice from them. I also learned a lot from observing my dad from an early age doing his business. In fact, he bought our first computer in order to handle his own books using QuickBooks. This was a DOS computer way back in the day. But he wasn't really much about computer guy, but he needed something to run his books on for his business. But yeah, I got to see that. I got to see how he handled scheduling and working with customers and customer relationships. Then also employees as well, he had a few employees, and how he kind of worked with them and the challenges that were there.

Jamon Holmgren: Over time, you know, it's been 13 years now. So I've sort of continued to learn in my circle of people, other models of businesses has grown beyond the construction industry, but that was definitely influential, especially at first.

Kyle Shevlin: Nice. That makes a lot of sense to me. I think it's great that you had opportunities to learn from not only the people you were working with, the companies directly, but you had chances to learn from your father. I think that's really interesting and maybe not something everyone has. I know you appreciate that, but I'm glad you shared that with us, too. So your career transition took place quite a few years ago. You said 13 just a moment ago, which puts you in a unique spot compared to a lot of the people perhaps in our audience or even people that I've had on the podcast before. Your transition was a while ago. I'm really curious what kind of advice might you have for people who are trying to make the change from one career into web development or software engineering now?

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah, I think that ultimately my experience was heavily, as we talked about earlier on the podcast, it was heavily influenced by the times, you know, at the time where I could say I was a designer of websites, where I would never say that today.

Kyle Shevlin: Right.

Jamon Holmgren: But the expectations were much lower, much different. So I definitely would not recommend that people take my exact path. I don't think that's necessarily the path that leads to success in 2018. At the same time, there are probably some

broader things that you could pull from my transition over. One of the things is that it is totally okay to start with a tech related thing that's still somewhat related to your previous career. You can use some of the value you may have gotten from learning and being in those other careers, but just move into tech.

Jamon Holmgren: Now tech is moving into everybody's lives. There's programmers at almost every business now, it seems like. Just the other day a programmer than I know was hired by an architecture firm. That feels kind of full circle for me because obviously that's what I used to do. But that's an option. If you're in architecture and you wanted to move into programming, why not be a programmer for an architecture firm? You get the benefit of maybe having some credibility there, certainly some domain knowledge, and then you get to learn the tech side of things and kind of branch out from there.

Jamon Holmgren: One thing that a friend of mine who, at some point it would be nice if he's able to make the transition, if he's on your show it would be awesome. But he actually was a machinist, I guess a machinist, kind of computer ... what do you call it? CNC machine operator. He is now going to the Lambda School to learn job programming for android. So he is hoping to make a transition. I think he's 35 years old, and he's making that career transition right now. That feels to me ... You know, when we had long conversations, he and I, about my career field and his, it seemed like the direction that made the most sense in these days where you could go and get the education, you get the connections that Lambda School brings to you, and then you're able to hit the grounding running in a career here.

Jamon Holmgren: I would probably say that's probably a more relevant direction to go than the way that I went. At the same time, if someone wants to try starting their own business and learning to code and doing what I was doing, more power to them. It's a path, it is a way that you can go.

Kyle Shevlin: Right. I think while we were pretty far apart in years to some degree, we had somewhat similar paths in the sense that you basically were able to teach yourself what you needed to know to get started. And I was able to do the same because the bar was at a different level than it is now, and the proliferation of code schools hadn't happened yet. You mentioned a code school in there, Lambda, and what you just said. I'm really hoping to get Ryan Hamblin of Lambda School onto the podcast here soon. We're talking about scheduling a time. So hopefully this is just even more pressure that he now has to come on the show and join the-

Jamon Holmgren: Absolutely.

Kyle Shevlin: I think there's lots of great options for people to make that transition today. You know, it's different than it was maybe a little bit, even just half a decade ago. But there's definitely lots of lessons you can still learn, and I'm glad you shared them. I'm gonna ask you the same question but with a slightly different angle

because I think there's probably plenty of people today who are even more entrepreneurial and entrepreneurially minded than maybe just five, 10 years ago, people who are doing side hustles and the gig economy and trying to make things work. What advice do you have for people maybe trying to start their own business or do that sort of thing?

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah, that's a great question. I think that I went into it quite naïve. I could have benefited from a lot more mentorship all the way throughout my career. In fact, it was something that as I look back at 13 years, that was probably the key missing ingredient, and it was something that I gained when I got two business partners that were five and 10 years older than me respectively. So that was something that definitely I would say, getting mentors that have been down this path before and can look at the challenges that are facing you or the opportunities that are facing you and give you good advice. That's totally a direction to go.

Jamon Holmgren: Another thing that I think is important is just being a little bit fearless. I think that's one of the things I was. You know, I sold my first website before I knew how to code websites. I sold my first iPhone app before I knew how to do it. I just said, "I can do it. I know I can do it." Then I did it. There are so many resources out there to learn. You don't have to go to Barnes and Noble anymore. You can go online and watch awesome videos, some of them that you've put out, Kyle, on Egghead and elsewhere. There's so many awesome resources out there, often very affordable or even free. So from that standpoint, don't fear about it. This is something that you can do. But then at the same time also, look ... You can be fearless without being arrogant. You can go out there and find mentors that can give you good advice.

Kyle Shevlin: That's great advice. Thank you for sharing that. Yeah, I think anyone trying to make a career change needs to either be fearless or just be really equipped to handle your fear. You're going to be afraid at time. You know, I struggle with it personally in different things, but I often find that the fear is worse than the actually doing of the act that you need to do. You know, for example you might be more afraid to make a podcast than the actual fear that comes from making a podcast ... just as an example, I don't know, maybe it fits, but-

Jamon Holmgren: No, that's a fantastic point, and it's something I think ... I'm glad that you said that because one of the listeners might listen to me saying "fearless" and think, Oh, but I have fear and thing, no, this isn't for me. That's not true. You know, I definitely had fear about things. It was just more that I did it anyway and, like you said, Kyle, once I was in the middle of it I found that it wasn't as bad as a thought. And there's a lot of help out there, too. You can join communities and ask questions and, you know, if you get stuck there are people that are willing to help.

Kyle Shevlin: Absolutely. There's more resources than ever, I think.

Jamon Holmgren: Absolutely.

Kyle Shevlin: I have on this show just like one kind of final question to ask you, Jamon. I'm kind of rewording it, 'cause I never know what to get from people, but I'm curious. Do you have any thoughts on what maybe the next thing in your life will be? Do you see Infinite Red lasting forever? I realize you maybe can't say anything specific about that, I don't want to put you in trouble with Todd or Ken, but that being said, do you have any ideas or dreams about what you might do in the future?

Jamon Holmgren: You know, that's a really good question. I think we're going through a little bit of an inflection point with Infinite Red, something that is much different than the past three years since we merged. It's not something that I necessarily can put into words at this point. I can just feel it happening. I do know that we've really zeroed in on what we're good at, and that is currently making really great user experiences using generally react and react native. That tends to be the thing that we're the best at.

Jamon Holmgren: At the same time we're looking at some other potential technologies that are coming down the road. One that is very interesting to me is AI. That's something that we're actually investing a lot of time into Gant Laborde. Right now, actually, the app that he's doing with Jason that is an AI app and it is something he's been doing a lot of research into. So I see potential. I mean, I don't know if it's going to end up being something that we pursue, but I see potential for various technologies.

Jamon Holmgren: And then at some point it would be really nice if we were to come up with a product. I think that doing consulting work is always, you know, it's a grind. It can be rewarding and it can be extremely ... You know, it's something that teaches you a lot, and you get to know a lot of different people and there' a lot of rewards there. But it's also a grind. You're on a project for three months, and then you're off. And you've done that before, Kyle, so you know what that's like. But it can be ... We want to make sure that Infinite Red is a place where people can be their whole career and not feel like they missed out. And if we were just a constancy the whole time, I think maybe some people would feel that they'd missed out, including maybe myself. So that would be something we'd pursue at some point. We don't have anything concrete yet, but we have some ideas.

Kyle Shevlin: That's really interesting. Thank you for sharing all that.

Jamon Holmgren: Yeah.

Kyle Shevlin: Thank you so much for joining me on the podcast today, Jamon.

Jamon Holmgren: Thanks for having me, Kyle. It was a lot of fun. It's always fun to talk with you, and this time we get to share with everybody.

Kyle Shevlin:	Sure do.
Kyle Shevlin:	And thank you for listening to another episode of Second Career Devs. If you want to be on the podcast, please send me an email to secondcareerdevs@gmail.com. I'd love to hear your story and discuss with you whether you'd be a good fit for the show.
Kyle Shevlin:	If you like the show, please share it with your friends. Share it on Twitter, on Facebook, wherever you're doing social media these days. It's the best way to get the show out there to new people.
Kyle Shevlin:	If you're not already doing it, please subscribe. You can subscribe in iTunes, on Google Play, on wherever you're listening to podcasts these days. And lastly, if you can take the time, please leave us a review. It does make a difference in helping other people discover the show.
Kyle Shevlin:	Once again, thank you for listening. I'll catch you next time. Bye.
Jamon Holmgren:	Bye.

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [00:45:14]