Kyle Shevlin: Hey, Everyone, and welcome to a new episode of Second Career Devs. I'm your host, Kyle Shevlin. Second Career Devs shares the stories of people who have changed their lives by changing their careers to software engineering or web development. As I like to say, it's about the road less traveled, and the lessons learned along the way.

Kyle Shevlin: This episode I'm joined by Grant Glidewell, who went from being a substance abuse counselor for adolescents to a web developer for Zesty.io. Now before we get into the episode, a quick word from our sponsor, Infinite Red.

Kyle Shevlin: Hey, Grant.

Grant Glidewell: Hey, Kyle.

Kyle Shevlin: How are you doing today?

Grant Glidewell: I am all right. How are you?

Kyle Shevlin: Nice. I'm doing well. Thank you for asking. I'm really excited that I've got you on the show today and we have a chance to share your story. You emailed me a while back. That's right, people. You do email me stories, and I will eventually get back to you. I know I am the worst with email, but Grant wrote to me with a really compelling story that I'm really excited to share with all of you. To that end, let's introduce you to our audience, Grant. Tell us who you are, what you're doing right now, and what you used to do.

Grant Glidewell: My name's Grant Glidewell. I'm a front end developer at Zesty.io, and I work mainly in React and Redux.

Kyle Shevlin: Nice. So you're working for Zesty.io, but as everyone knows, this is Second Career Devs. So what was that first career that you have that we're going to discuss and get into today?

Grant Glidewell: My first career that I'm transitioning into this from is substance abuse counseling. I specialized in working with adolescents with substance abuse issues.

Kyle Shevlin: Wow, that is a heck of a topic and a heck of a job to have because of just how important and influential that work had to be. How long were you doing substance abuse counseling?

Grant Glidewell: I was in the industry for 15 years. I started out working in an acute psychiatric hospital, and that is exactly what you think it is, people with schizophrenia, people off the street, and eventually worked my way into my own private practice with a partner of mine.

Kyle Shevlin: Why don't we start there at the beginning then, the acute psychiatric hospital. How did you get involved with that? How did you get started there?

Grant Glidewell: So when I was 16, I ended up in a hospital about three times from drug overdoses, so it became abundantly clear that there was some sort of problem happening. My mom at the time did her due diligence and got me in treatment and basically got my head on straight. I was one of the lucky ones. It worked for me, and I wanted nothing more in the world than to turn around and help other people in that same situation find what I had found. So from the time I was 16, I had a pretty clear picture of what I wanted to do. I know that's really uncommon, so I feel fortunate that I had that direction. I had a couple of role models that I connected with, and they directed me where to go to school and what to study. Eventually, at 18, they said it's time for you to get this job at this hospital. It was an acute psychiatric hospital, and what they needed was people to work the floor. What that means is you're like an orderly. They don't call them that anymore. They call them mental health workers. But you're out there with the patients, just making sure that they're not killing one another and not getting into too much trouble.

Kyle Shevlin: That makes sense. That had to be really challenging. You mean it literally when you say not kill one another. These are people coming off of addictions and potentially with significant mental health disorders, and putting them all in the same space has to be a very challenging, perhaps even risky environment to work in. Is that somewhat accurate? Can you paint that picture a little for us?

Grant Glidewell: Yeah, it's funny you say risky, because, yeah, there's what we would call a code green, which is when a patient would get physical with either another patient or a staff member. We would have multiple code greens per shift. So just on a bad night, we would have to put people in restraints, and the nurses would come and give them medication and just try and keep things calm on the unit. There's definitely a rough atmosphere that I had to deal with from a pretty young age. Fortunately, I had direction, like I was saying earlier. I was going to school and really wanted to work my way into working specifically with addiction and not just with acute psychiatric stuff. But my exposure to all of that definitely shapes the way that I deal with people even today.

Kyle Shevlin: Interesting. So you're studying to get into a position where you're specifically doing addict counseling, right? So how many years were you in the acute ward before you were able to transition into focusing more on addiction work?

Grant Glidewell: I think before I was even able to do what are called internship hours, I was working at least two years just on the floor and just doing school. But the certification and license that I worked with requires 6,000 hours of internship.

Kyle Shevlin: Whoa.

Grant Glidewell: Yeah, it was three years full-time.

Kyle Shevlin:	That's a long time to work at something. I mean, by then, you're 66% of your way to being a genius-level expert at it, according to the 10,000 hour rule. So you're putting in tons of time. What are some of the things that you learn during that time that maybe really shape that outlook, you said, of people? Why don't we get into that right away?
Grant Glidewell:	I think probably ... I mean, I want to have some genius, deep thing to tell you here that I learned as a counselor, but, really, a lot of it is just practical application and dealing with logic problems and listening to people and trying to repeat back to them in a way that they can hear how it is that their thinking is backwards or not working to their best interest. If you can get somebody to hear themselves, sometimes they're able to turn around. Other times, they hear themselves, and they just don't care. They're going to keep doing what they're doing. But I always think that you're doing your job best as a counselor or a therapist if you're holding up a mirror that somebody can see, if that doesn't sound too cheesy. I'm hearing that myself, and it's pretty cheesy.
Kyle Shevlin:	No, I think it makes sense. You also sound like you were a human rubber duck. We talk about rubber duck programming where we explain a problem to something or to someone, and we solve the problem in that. That's what you were trying to get people to do, is by explaining what they're going through, they realize the bugs in their own protocols and their own way of thinking and rationalizing about things in the world. That's what it sounds like to me. Is that kind of accurate?
Grant Glidewell:	Absolutely. I mean, it's problem solving, and depending on the environment, it can be more or less intense, definitely.
Kyle Shevlin:	Interesting. I think we're going to come back to that later on in the conversation, because I think there's a lot that your counseling career probably affects the way you do work today. But I do want to talk about ... You said you went into a private practice for a while. Is that correct?
Grant Glidewell:	Yes. Yeah, I did. I got an offer from a long-time friend of mine, and I couldn't pass it up. It was risky, and it involved basically walking away from a secure job, but it gave me the benefit of doing work the way I knew I could be most effective.
Kyle Shevlin:	Interesting. So how long had you been working at the previous place before this opportunity came to you?
Grant Glidewell:	Let's see here, so where are we? I worked the floor, internship hours accrued, and I got licensed. So this was probably six years into it. I'm definitely in my early 20s here, so it took about that long before I had the skills to take on groups of my own and dealing with families individually and being able to ... And this is where you understand it and a lot of these second career devs will understand. You have to be able to sell yourself. It's one thing to know that I can

work with a kid and their family and turn things around, but it's another to get them to believe that. Developing all of those skills took quite a long time.

Kyle Shevlin: Sure. That makes perfect sense to me. You can gain a lot of technical ability really quickly or you can gain a lot of knowledge really quickly, but sometimes it simply does take some years and time to develop an understanding, especially of the nuance of things. When you're trying to convince people that you are capable of doing what you need to do, it sometimes takes just significant time to develop all the arguments, all the arrows in your quiver that you might be able to use in an argument to convince ... not an argument, but you know what I mean, to convince someone that you're capable of doing that job. So you get this dream job. Well, that's my words. Was this a dream job to you? Let me rephrase that?

Grant Glidewell: Well, I'll say it was absolutely the goal. What it turned into was the dream job. I went from the constraints of a system that's dictated by insurance companies, which, I mean, that's a whole other kind of show, but it created a lot of moral conflicts for me, we'll say, to being totally free from that and being able to interact with my clients and families exactly how I saw fit to be effective and help them.

Kyle Shevlin: That's interesting. Correct me if I'm wrong, but my wife worked in social work for a while, and she told me about some challenges she had where maybe the moral conflict was she knew what the thing she wanted to do to help the people was, but the bureaucracy or the law or something prevented her. Is that kind of the moral conflicts you're getting into there?

Grant Glidewell: So some of it I would definitely say is the law getting in the way, but a lot of it really came down to insurance companies saying you have to discharge this patient. He has, quote, unquote, failed treatment, when I know that the next recommended thing that they're going to have me tell this person to do is not going to be effective for them, and we have to leave their families out in the cold because insurance won't cover it.

Kyle Shevlin: That's awful.

Grant Glidewell: It really is, and it feels terrible. So coming into this situation where I have the freedom to ... Whether the family can afford it or not or whether insurance says it's okay or not, I can do what I want to do or what I think is the right thing to do in a certain situation. It's just night and day, and that's part of why I couldn't continue to work in the industry. We'll get to that, I'm sure, but there was no company out there that I could work for after doing work this way.

Kyle Shevlin: That makes sense to me. I think you hear about that in all sorts of realms and spheres, of people who essentially work for themselves or go into a business because they just can't succumb themselves to anyone else's way of doing

something. But I think that often leads to innovation and success. You had quite a bit of success for a while, it seems like. Am I right?

Grant Glidewell: Oh, absolutely. We share another hobby, and that's golf. The reason I bring that up when you talk about success is not only was I able to support myself and my wife and paid the bills, but also was able to enjoy a certain amount of time off and a certain amount of freedom.

Kyle Shevlin: Yeah, some leisure.

Grant Glidewell: Absolutely, absolutely.

Kyle Shevlin: I get that. I get that 100%.

Grant Glidewell: So it was nice to have that kind of time off. To be honest, I miss it just a little bit. I do enjoy being busy as a developer. It's fascinating. I was actually talking to friend of mine earlier today about it. It's interesting work in a such a different way, in such a different ... The problems that I'm solving while somebody's life isn't on the line are still captivating, which is bizarre because I never thought I'd be saying that.

Kyle Shevlin: You never thought you could focus as hard as you do now on the problems you do when much less seems to be at stake. Is that kind of what I'm gathering?

Grant Glidewell: Yeah. It almost felt like what fueled my inspiration to work with these families and to help these kids ... And I don't think I'm wrong in this. Some of it's just there's so much on the line, and it's very intense work. I didn't think I'd be able to find that for anything else, and I don't think that it's the same type of drive. But, man, it's still captivating, so I don't feel like I'm missing out in some way in that. It's kind of fascinating. This is, honestly, as we're recording this, the first time I've even thought of that.

Kyle Shevlin: I think that makes sense. I actually think that the pleasure that comes from intensely focusing and work through a problem is something lots of developers experience, and especially people who come to the career from something else find a lot of joy and pleasure in, because maybe the work they were doing before didn't offer them an opportunity to really focus through a problem and experience, honestly, sometimes the rush even of breaking through a wall and solving a really tough problem. But you were solving incredibly tough problems with people's lives. We can't negate or reduce that by any means. You were doing amazing work. What started to be the change in that work? What started to be the thing that maybe put some writing on the wall that led you to need to do something else?

Grant Glidewell: Oh, there was definitely writing on the wall. Really, two years before everything ended up totally collapsing, we started to notice other programs in the area not

being able to keep a census and just insurance companies tightening up what they're willing to do.

Kyle Shevlin: So this was what, 2005, 2006, somewhere in there?

Grant Glidewell: No, I would say this is 2017, 2016, 2015. Let's call it 2015. That makes-

Kyle Shevlin: You said collapse, and I was thinking economic collapse.

Grant Glidewell: No. Actually, during that time, things did get hard for us, but, surprisingly, and because we had the freedom to work with people sometimes fully sponsoring them through our program, we were able to keep a census and able to keep some work coming in, so that was not too hard. Really, I think the more recent ... It's been referred to as the jobless recovery or something like that. The stagnation in the middle class really started to hurt things. Also, with Obamacare, the way that that impacted insurance companies and health care as a whole really did a number on small private practices, not just ours, but I think everywhere was really tough.

Kyle Shevlin: Is that because insurance companies didn't need to negotiate with you, with small businesses, or something like that? Not to make it too political, but I'm just curious what it was.

Grant Glidewell: Right. I think that's part of it, where some of it's they don't have to negotiate. But their reimbursement rates have always gone down and tightened up, and this, I think, gave them a reason. Especially in California, we've got a pretty strong ... I'm trying to remember the name of what the market is that I had to buy insurance from all the time. We have a state marketplace for insurance, and, really, what that does is just group up individuals to get a better deal on plans. That wasn't quite enough to drive rates to really where they ought to be. I get insurance in general and socializing medicine and all this is really controversial and political, but there's a lot of problems with that system, and this is just one of the symptoms of it.

Kyle Shevlin: That had to be super tough then to see the political aspects affecting you as a business owner and you as a counselor, right? You're working with these people. You've devoted your life to helping these people in need, and just these cards in this deck start to get stacked against you. As we're talking about this, I'm thinking about how challenging this must have been, just knowing what we face in America today in general. We have an opioid epidemic. It seems like addiction, at least in the media, is increasing. We need more help, and yet you're in this situation where you're already helping, but things aren't going right. How challenging was it to face that and deal with that?

Grant Glidewell: Just hearing you saying that just gets me a little bit fired up, but, yeah, absolutely. It's super tough to think about that and watch this social change. I mean, this is another kind of political footgun, but marijuana get legalized in

California and watching all of the stuff that happens as a result of that with the teenage population that I worked with specifically. The whole sea change in front of me indicates nothing other than we need more of you, exactly what you're saying. But the way everything has played out has put ... If you can get big money, find somebody with capital to stuff beds full of patients with good insurance, you can bill that, and that's the only way that a lot of addiction programs were able to survive. There's a lot of information out there on those types of nasty programs, but that's really the direction that it went. Some of that was out of necessity, but that also led to the smaller places like us closing down.

Kyle Shevlin: That's illuminating to me, because it almost sounds akin to ... And this is also political, so I'm going to join the foray, I guess. It sounds akin to the privatization of the prison system, even. Something big is able to create efficiencies at scale that they're able to monetize. It sounds to me like that's kind of what was happening at this time. Bigger providers, the insurance companies could work with and monetize in a way, but that might not be the care that these adolescents really need. I worked with adolescents as a youth pastor for a while when I was younger. I'm curious. What challenges were there specifically working with adolescents as a drug counselor?

Grant Glidewell: So you interviewed somebody earlier on in your podcast who was an EMT, and he said something that I've said many, many times, and that's you've got to be sensitive, because you're meeting somebody on the worst day of their life or on a very bad day, at least. Kind of understanding that when you sit down with a kid who has no idea why he's in some weird office with some weird, slightly angry bald guy talking to him about problems he doesn't think he has, or she, it becomes a little bit easier when you can start from that place of empathy. As much as it's challenging ... And, honestly, in the substance abuse industry, working with adolescents, people don't want to do that. They want to work with people who are a little bit more established and have some agency in their life. But having gotten sober myself as a young person, I felt uniquely qualified, and it tended to work out pretty well. I feel like I was able to do a lot of good out there.

Kyle Shevlin: That makes sense to me. I mean, you bring up empathy, which seems to be a theme of this podcast in general. Working a previous career generates empathy that you're able to bring to the table today. But, also, you took your own private experience and was able to apply it to these people again and again. That makes perfect sense to me. Let's start to transition though a little bit. You went through this challenging time. Your business shuts down, I'm guessing. What happens next?

Grant Glidewell: Well, I mean, the order of events, essentially, were I start to see this stuff happen. I've been working with a couple of clients for longer than usual. I start to realize this may not be something I can keep doing. There may be an end of this, and that was a really, really scary thought, because this is the only thing I

had ever prepared myself to do. Like I said earlier on, I knew this is what I wanted to do, and there wasn't something else that I knew I wanted to do.

Kyle Shevlin: There was no lingering thing in the background that was like, well, maybe, well, maybe. No, this is exactly what you had been doing, literally, your whole adult life, right?

Grant Glidewell: Absolutely. So once I got over that initial shock of this can end, you go through the whole stages of grief and whatnot over this career, which is very real. I think that's something that a lot of your listeners will identify with. You definitely go through a grieving process, if it's something you've done for a long time and you love.

Kyle Shevlin: Even I agree with that. There are still days I'm mad about the fact that I had a failed previous career. I'm totally with you on that page. So you're grieving through this. You're dealing with this.

Grant Glidewell: Right. I one day kind of sat down at my computer, and I had spent the previous year messing around with building keyboards and getting back into gaming. When I was a young one, I played a game called Counter-Strike that some of the kids might know today as CS:GO, but gamer when I was a kid, dropped it for quite a few years in the middle there, and just started getting back into it when golf became too expensive.

Kyle Shevlin: It is expensive, unfortunately.

Grant Glidewell: Oh, man, it really is. So when the other hobbies were too much money, kind of staying in and being able to spend $35 on a game and get a lot of hours of entertainment out of it, that's a pretty economically hobby. So I was doing that, and I was building keyboards. I started to think, I'm very comfortable and competent when it comes to dealing with computers in general. I mean, it's kind of the classic story of I was always the computer guy. I'm the guy ... Can you fix the printer or whatever? Dealing with stuff with the parents, building home network stuff. So it was always kind of there in the background, but it was never something that I wanted to capitalize on or felt passionate about to make a career out of it. But, suddenly, I find myself in this position where I've got to find something else to do. Looking on GitHub at some open source keyboard programming software, I thought, this is kind of cool.

Kyle Shevlin: You were taking these keyboards, and in your email to me, you said, specifically, you were playing Overwatch, right?

Grant Glidewell: Yes. I'm a Zenyatta main, for anybody who cares out there.

Kyle Shevlin: Maybe we'll have you add your gamer tag as a link in the show, if you feel comfortable with that. Who knows? You might be able to get some more clan mates out of this, if you're interested. So you're playing Overwatch, and you

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were building these custom keyboards. In order to up your gameplay, as many people do, you started to program your keyboards, am I right?

Grant Glidewell: Yeah. So, I mean, you want something with a high polling rate. You want to make sure that the switch lets you know the instant that it actuates. There's all kinds of just super nerdy stuff that you can do, and there's a subreddit, mechanical keyboards, full of crazy people who just spend absurd amounts of money on keyboards. I spent a lot of time on that subreddit and have built a number of keyboards now.

Kyle Shevlin: Nice. So you've built a number of keyboards, and you started to realize it's not just that you're programming these things to be able to accomplish feats and play your game better, but it starts to click in your mind that this is real programming. I'm doing real programming. Am I right about that?

Grant Glidewell: It was much more that this is not scary. This is not something that only ... And not to put anybody off out there, but only insanely smart people do this. I have a buddy who does this, and I think we're going to get into that fairly soon here. But he was also starting to build keyboards at the same time, so we had this common thread to talk about stuff. I would mention things here and there like, oh, that's kind of cool. He's like, "Yeah, that's just programming."

Kyle Shevlin: Right, so let's get into that. You mentioned in the email to me you had a friend who is a developer at a company and you're doing this stuff with. He just kind of nonchalantly is like, hey, why don't you check this out? Why don't you tell us, what was your first foray into programming languages for the web and that kind of thing?

Grant Glidewell: I found my way to Codecademy, which, at first, I saw the misspelling of the name and rolled my eyes a little bit. I've gotten used to that in the industry now.

Kyle Shevlin: To the audience, one of my first things I ever did was Codecademy courses as well. You can't help but say code academy, like two words, but there is no A. It's really challenging, so I'm totally with you there.

Grant Glidewell: Yeah, it's tough. So just clicking onto that website, first thing I find is Java. I'm like, okay, I like coffee [crosstalk 00:29:27] long lines of hobbies that I've spent way too much time doing, and just started looking at how does this work. There's a variable, and we can assign them. There are different types, and there are strings and nths. Then we can do some loops, and just kind of digging into, okay, this is very, very remedial programming stuff. I've always been one that I would rather jump into the deep end and just kind of trial by fire than just take the stairs, so to speak.

Kyle Shevlin: You're ready to jump full speed ahead, whether you know what you're doing or not.

Grant Glidewell:	Yeah. I like to move fast and break things, as they say. So I'm starting out with this, and I'm like, I could just call my buddy. So I did, and he kind of laughed at me a little bit. He's like, "Don't deal with Java. That's kind of ridiculous. I work mainly in JavaScript. Why don't you check that out and I can help you out with that?" I wanted to be really careful, because I didn't want to bug him. I didn't want to be like, hey, teach me all your ways and guide me through this process, because I wanted to be sensitive. Because, to be honest, I had kind of been a jerk to him about his career, because I felt like you just work on the internet. We hadn't discussed it in any way, so I didn't know much about it.
Kyle Shevlin:	That's really interesting. Is that because you spent years doing some real hard work, to put it in quotations? It was really hard. I'm not trying to false that. But you had that in your head, like this is what real work is, and then sometimes you get that feeling that, oh, those dev engineers are just overpaid people working on laptops all day. Is that kind of what I'm sensing?
Grant Glidewell:	Yeah. Actually, I would make fun of the hats he'd wear, and I would do this directly to his face. This isn't behind his back, but [crosstalk 00:31:45] the silly hats he wears and shorts. He's oddly into bicycles, all of these very meme-y type of developer things. I just didn't get it. So that's kind of all I knew.
Kyle Shevlin:	Says the man who has tons of mechanical keyboards now.
Grant Glidewell:	All right, all right, I hear you, I hear you.
Kyle Shevlin:	But, no, it's true that sometimes there are stereotypes of what a dev is. Even that can be challenging to people making career changes, because they fear they don't fit that. They don't fit some meme or they don't fit some description or they fear they're not smart enough, and it's just not true. You got over your feeling about your buddy, and you started to ask for help. I'm sure you quickly realize, no, this is totally something I can do. Why don't we talk about that? Your buddy points you to JavaScript, and you started diving in. What clicked for you? What really helped you learn it really quickly or well?
Grant Glidewell:	Well, I drove through everything that Codecademy had on their website, and then I found my way to a website called FreeCodeCamp.org, and they started out with basic HTML and basic CSS, and I remembered that from MySpace and modifying pages back then. So some of it kind of would ring a bell for me, and it started to feel a little bit like this was me. It started to feel a little bit less like I'm trying to be somebody else, and more like I'm coming home.
Kyle Shevlin:	That's really interesting. You're coming home. Elaborate on that more. What made programming feel like home?
Grant Glidewell:	So before I used drugs, when I was a kid ... Which let's be honest, I started drinking at 11, so this is pretty early. But I grew up around computers. My dad was a technology consultant in the '80s, and I was exposed to video

conferencing via satellite when I was a really young kid. I mean, that's the type of stuff that he worked on. He was a technologist. He was not a programmer. I mean, he was on the business side, but it exposed me very early on to some things that I kind of took for granted. I didn't know that this isn't something that everybody is around. As much as the direction I chose to go was to interact with people, I also had a very good relationship with the machines.

Kyle Shevlin: That's really interesting. That's a level of exposure not everyone gets.

Grant Glidewell: Oh, yeah. It's something that I kind of took for granted, and it's something that's really served me well. Now I don't think it's necessary, now being at what I'll call the mid level of my career in this industry. I don't think that background is necessary, and your show is a huge testament to that, and the people that you interview. But it definitely helped me to get to a place where I didn't feel like I was pretending. That's not imposter syndrome. We haven't gotten there yet, but it helped with that.

Kyle Shevlin: That makes sense to me, because my having this sense of home, it's almost like a reorientation of your compass, to some degree, knowing that you're pointing in a good direction. You are able to avoid, probably, some of the apprehension and internal fear that I think a lot of people making changes feel and sense. Is that kind of right?

Grant Glidewell: Absolutely. As soon as I felt that, as soon as I felt, okay, this isn't something foreign or outside of me, it allowed me to really jump in and take risks and try things and fail. There's something that MPJ, on his Fun Fun Function channel, says, that feeling of failure is learning. That's something that I championed in my career working with kids. They're going to fail, and that's something that's really hard on families. But that failure doesn't mean that it's the ultimate outcome.

Kyle Shevlin: Setbacks happen. I've never been through any kind of AA or anything like that, but it's one day at a time, right? You might fail, but you pick yourself back up. A setback doesn't mean you're a failure. It just means that you're human, and you can still improve and grow. Is that kind of accurate there?

Grant Glidewell: I would say so. Really, we don't have an option for two days at a time. Something I think my career prepared me very well for ... Because I spent so much time teaching and talking about the process of learning and changing behavior. I mean, that really was my expertise, was trying to help young brains retrain in a different direction. While my brain wasn't the youngest, it certainly responds in a similar way if I change my behavior. So having that road block out of the way, I was able to spend every extra time that I had, which, to be honest, was quite a bit, with very few clients coming in, on FreeCodeCamp.org or meeting with my buddy and reviewing code or spending time on Codewars or whatever.

Kyle Shevlin:	So you got to bust your chops, and you got to work really hard because of your circumstances. When did you finally decide that now is the time that I'm going to start looking for a job?
Grant Glidewell:	I had gone to quite a few local meetups, which I highly, highly recommend. If you can get to something within an hour of where you live, do it. I spent probably an hour each meetup that I went to just in traffic getting into downtown San Diego. It's insane to go down there, but it was worth it just to talk code with people who do it on a daily basis, just to hear the words that you've been reading on your screen for so long and understand how they're pronounced sometimes. That can be really confusing. But normalizing what you're seeing in front of you all the time is so important, let alone this is exactly how I ended up getting my first couple of jobs. One guy stood up at the end of a meetup, as is pretty common at a lot of meetups, and said, hey, I'm looking for developers. He said the magic words, "I don't care what your level of experience is." As soon as he said that, I was like, I'm all over this.
Kyle Shevlin:	Were all the juniors like piranhas, feasting on this person?
Grant Glidewell:	For this particular one, no one else seemed to come up to him. It was really strange.
Kyle Shevlin:	That's very serendipitous for you.
Grant Glidewell:	Yeah. I let him know, hey, I'm really interested. He happened to be running a tiny startup right down the street from me, so it worked out really, really well. He took me on for no money, and he paid me, I shit you not, in dog treats.
Kyle Shevlin:	Do you have a lot of dogs? Was this a worthwhile transaction for you?
Grant Glidewell:	At the time, I had my little Toy Fox Terrier, Ratchet. She has since left, but she-
Kyle Shevlin:	I'm sorry.
Grant Glidewell:	It's okay. She had a really good life, but she had really great treats from this company that that's what they were doing was selling dog treats online and trying to make really natural whatever type of dog treats. He had this really cool app idea to sell his stuff online, and so I got to work with React. I got to work in a framework called Meteor, which included GraphQL, through Apollo. It's still this really cutting-edge stuff. So the very first time I got to lay my hands on somebody else's code base, it's this intensely cool shit. I had no doubt that this is absolutely the right thing for me to be doing.
Kyle Shevlin:	Nice. You lucked out there. You didn't have to deal with any janky, old, tech and code that you had to wrap your head around. You got to dive deep into new stuff, and that sounds exactly like ... Based on your own words earlier, you like to dive really deep. You don't take t stairs, right?

Grant Glidewell: Yeah. I want to just jump straight to the top of the building. I got to work with that. That's something that happened only because I was going to meetups and sticking my neck out there and saying, hey, I'm Grant. I'm new, but I'm hungry.

Kyle Shevlin: Now you're not paid in dog treats any more, I presume, right? Things have gotten to the monetary level, I'm going to guess at this point.

Grant Glidewell: Yes, yes. I make a salary, and it's US dollars.

Kyle Shevlin: Nice, nice. Tell me about what you're doing today.

Grant Glidewell: Right now, I am working with Zesty.io. What that is, is a SaaS CMS. These are acronyms that, wow, when I started, why would you even use that acronym? But software as a service content management system, born in the cloud. So all the catchphrases, but it's actually really cool stuff. You had mentioned before the show that you've started playing a little bit of Rocket League, and they're [crosstalk 00:42:56]-

Kyle Shevlin: I have.

Grant Glidewell: Yeah, they're one of our clients. So every bit of information that you see in there that is pulled off the web comes through Zesty.

Kyle Shevlin: Okay. Just for the audience, you can find me on Xbox or PS4 for Rocket League. My gamer tag is Beard Fade, just putting that out there, always up for a game with other devs.

Grant Glidewell: Sounds good.

Kyle Shevlin: So you're working for Zesty.io, the SaaS CMS that's powering Rocket League and other things. I kind of want to bring this up to the people. You talk about trial by fire. You mentioned in your email to me that they were working with a technology you had never worked with, and you just didn't care, and you just went for the job anyways. Am I right in that?

Grant Glidewell: Yeah. They asked me about it in the interview, and I said, nope, I have not used it, but I can learn.

Kyle Shevlin: What technology was that?

Grant Glidewell: That was Redux. It was another guy I had met at a meetup, and he interviewed me, brought me in, and said, "We'll give you the job, but watch these videos and just know that you're going to learn this and you're going to need to know it better than I do." I love Redux. That general pattern is something that feels really natural to me now.

Kyle Shevlin:	It's a lot of fun when you first learn it and learn about immutability and updating state that way, so that's awesome. I think the lesson to maybe take from that and give to the audience is you don't have to know everything in the stack that you're hoping to work for. Go for it anyways. You don't need to meet every requirement that's on a job rec.
Grant Glidewell:	Absolutely. You don't need to know everything in general. I mean, Dan Abramoff just published that article about all the things he doesn't know. It's shocking to some people, but it's not an ego boost to read it, because the things that he doesn't know, some of them I didn't even know existed in the first place. But it's definitely ... It clues me into what specialization can do for you, and I feel like that's an important thing to be able to move towards, is specializing.
Kyle Shevlin:	That makes sense. I'll put a link to the article in the show notes. Let's start to tie these together though. So you've been an engineering for a while. Congratulations on making that significant change. What things do you think you bring from your previous career to your new career that maybe you could have only learned from those years you've put in the trenches helping those people out?
Grant Glidewell:	I'm reluctant to say this one. My boss frequently will say, well, the pressure's going to be on with this, and this is going to be really hard and this and that. None of it really feels that hard.
Kyle Shevlin:	No, that makes sense to me. There are dollars on the line. There are things that matter, but that makes perfect sense that, to you, someone's life is a little slightly maybe more concerning and important than an arbitrary deadline imposed by a product manager. Am I kind of right on that?
Grant Glidewell:	Oh, absolutely. These are people who haven't gotten phone calls at 3:00 in the morning from parents with their kids who are missing and then in the ER and then going and visiting them in the hospital the next day. That hasn't been their experience, but that definitely brings me some perspective in dealing with this stuff. Now who knows, later on in my career, when I've forgotten more of that and kind of dug into this lifestyle, maybe I'll be more antsy about this stuff. But that doesn't mean I don't take it seriously, but I don't feel quite the same level of pressure. But I definitely have drive to solve problems, and that's something that, apparently ... if it's a social issue within a family or code that is working that shouldn't, which is worse than code that doesn't work that should, as you know.
Kyle Shevlin:	Yeah.
Grant Glidewell:	But whatever the issue is, I have that drive to solve problems and also the ability to compromise and say we can solve the problem this way, but these are the problems that remain because of the way that we solved that. I think that's something that I see. People want a perfect solution a lot of times, and I tend

not to get too caught up in that. That may make me sound like I'm a sloppy coder, but that isn't the case. It's really about everything is going to be a compromise to one degree or the other. Knowing that going into it, I think, allows me to make really good decisions.

Kyle Shevlin: That makes sense to me. It actually makes me want to connect you with a previous guest of mine who's also in the San Diego area, Michael Chan, because he talked a lot about not getting obsessed with clean code and perfect solutions. Be more concerned with solving problems and shipping what you need to ship to your users. So I'll make an introduction to you too on Twitter for you, but that makes sense to me. Do you think there's also anything related to the fact that what you were doing as a counselor was ... We talked about rubber ducking them almost. Do you think that helps you at all in your current job with maybe the people you work with or even the coding?

Grant Glidewell: Yeah. It's funny, because before I had worked in a team, I had a theory that my communication style was going to allow me to just make teams work much, much better. To a certain degree and in certain situations, that's been true. But most of the time it just helps me not create more problems, which I think is maybe underrated. I know when to kind of go with the flow in certain situations and when challenging somebody might be a good idea. So as far as counseling skills, being low guy on the totem pole, understanding not to trip on my own tiny feet, if that makes sense.

Kyle Shevlin: That's interesting. It might serve you even better as your career progresses too, because you'll be able to call upon a wealth of knowledge that maybe at this early stage you don't get to use as much, but I could see being more valuable five, ten years down the line. Do you think that might be true too?

Grant Glidewell: I certainly hope so.

Kyle Shevlin: I certainly hope so too.

Grant Glidewell: I think you're right. I think your audience is going to connect with this. Starting out in this, you come in with this sense of everybody else knows. They've forgotten more than I've ever learned. Trying to stay humble and stay right-sized is something that I think serves a lot of developers really well, including my direct supervisor. My boss at Zesty is amazing at not flexing in certain situations, where he could easily just say it has to be done this way. But he's been a really good supervisor to have, and I recognize good management when I see it.

Kyle Shevlin: That's awesome, and that's such a blessing, especially early on in your career, to have quality managers that you get to learn and grow from. So I'm personally thankful that you have that and glad to hear that. What advice that you haven't mentioned maybe so far that you can think of do you have for other people that are trying to make a career change, that are trying to go from something into this new industry? Do you have anything for them?

Grant Glidewell: Definitely. I would say meeting with people in person and interacting with people around code is really important, because when you're learning and you're on Codecademy or FreeCodeCamp.org or whatever, you're very isolated. There aren't very much jobs out there in coding that are isolated. You work with a team. You interact with people. You make decisions together. You solve problems together. You look at and review code together. Being able to communicate how your process led you to one conclusion or another is, I would argue, more important than your ability to memorize syntax. That's something that I've heard other people on your show say, but it's worth repeating. Your ability to communicate your thinking is of the utmost importance.

Kyle Shevlin: That makes sense to me, and definitely something that I think everyone needs to develop the skill of. Personally, for me, I find being able to create common vernacular, especially on cross-functional teams, is really important. I don't want to discourage people who maybe aren't close enough to things. I think you said a few things in there that are really key to me, is that it's avoiding the isolation, whether that is the ... Go out of your way to get to a meetup is probably potentially very helpful too, but I'm certain there are people that that might be either impossible for geolocation reasons or other reasons. But avoiding isolation is probably important, getting involved in some kind of community significantly is probably an important step.

Grant Glidewell: Oh, yeah. The open source community is a great place to start with that. There are Slack channels and Discord channels and all that kind of stuff. If you want to deal with the potential cluster that is reddit, you can also connect with people on there. It's not just in person. That's ideal, but even being able to do it over Slack. Or when you make a poll, what do you write in the message? How do you communicate to somebody these are the decisions that I made for this particular patch?

Kyle Shevlin: That makes a ton of sense to me. I guess, I only have really one remaining question for you, Grant. That is, do you have any parting words, maybe things of wisdom or things you think you'd really want career changers to know?

Grant Glidewell: It's simpler than you think. Everything that I wrote when I was very new ... And I'm still early in this ... is so much more complicated than it needs to be. The really, really hard problems have been solved, so standing on the shoulders of giants makes you look really good.

Kyle Shevlin: Those are excellent parting words. Grant, I'm so glad that you were able to come on the show today and share your story. It was a pleasure talking with you.

Grant Glidewell: Thank you. It was great talking with you, Kyle.

Kyle Shevlin: And thank you for listening to another episode of Second Career Devs. If you like the episode, consider sharing it with your friends, writing a review, or both. If

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Grant Glidewell: Bye.