Twitter Thread by Jamon Holmgren



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Today, I had lunch with a friend who owns a small construction company (like 5 employees).

He told me he's spent much of the last five years writing code, building this complex line-of-business app in Visual Basic and MS Access. And that it's essentially saved his business.

It's interesting, because here's this construction worker, used to working on physical things, talking about how Stackoverflow made such a difference in his life.

He has discovered on his own some of the same things we talk about here. He started rewriting his VB into C#, got one form done, and realized what a huge job it would be. And then decided it wasn't worth it to refactor everything just to have the latest language.

He talked about worrying he would build something that would become too much of a house of cards and that it would become unmaintainable.

We talked about automated testing, which he'd "heard of before". He was very curious why you'd want to do that, and what benefit it would bring.

He said he only had one other friend who knew anything about code + construction. He knows of dozens of small construction companies who are still doing everything manually, and badly.

Meanwhile, his company has consistent automated estimates, purchase orders, and invoices.

He has no idea what Silicon Valley is all about. He'd never heard of Slack. He just needed code to help his company survive, and discovered he loved it.

I asked him if he wanted to code full time someday, and he said, "Definitely."

His son is now studying computer science at a university and my buddy is excited to possibly work with him at some point in the future.

Code is changing everything. Or, rather, _accessible_ code is changing everything.

One postscript: as we were about to leave, he said, "I might be weird, but I REALLY LOVE debugging. It's so satisfying!"

"You're going to do just fine, buddy." ■

PPS: I spent years working in construction prior to coding. More here: https://t.co/qGiueCPVUI

> Building my first home in 2003. Yes I was skinny once. pic.twitter.com/HWOxJKpweg
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> — Jamon Holmgren (@jamonholmgren) September 24, 2018

I should probably tweet more about my experiences back then. It was in the dark ages, you know, 1996-2005.

Here is another thread about some of the home design I used to do: https://t.co/Nl52s0SONt

> Way back in 2002-2009ish, I used to design homes and remodels (along with freelance coding). It definitely feels long ago now, but it was a big part of my life back then.
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> I'm still trying to figure out where those files went. They could be lost to history. But I salvaged a few.
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> — Jamon Holmgren (@jamonholmgren) October 5, 2018