

SESSION 2

Ask An Old Guy

October 17, 2024

michael@barrow.me

What We'll Cover

1. Understanding IT Career Paths & Industry Evolution
2. Soft Skills, Communication, and Adapting to Change
3. Troubleshooting Strategies and Project Management
4. Managing Technical Debt and Effective Escalation
5. Scalability, Resilience, and Security
6. Team Dynamics, Vendor Selection, and Leading IT Teams
7. Career Growth, Ethics in IT, and Learning from Failure

Soft Skills in IT

The Importance of Soft Skills in IT

- IT is not just about technical expertise
- Collaboration with cross-functional teams (developers, designers, stakeholders)
- Effective communication with technical and non-technical stakeholders
- Problem-solving beyond code: strategic thinking and flexibility
- Example: A developer who could only code vs. a developer who can communicate and lead.

Essential Soft Skills for IT Success

- Communication and Active Listening
- Teamwork and Collaboration
- Problem-solving and Critical Thinking
- Time Management and Prioritization
- Adaptability and Continuous Learning
- Conflict Resolution and Diplomacy

Communication Skills in IT

- Explaining technical concepts to non-technical audiences
- Writing clear documentation and reports
- Effective presentations for different stakeholders
(technical, business)
- Aligning with business goals through communication

Activity: Writing a Status Update for Non-Technical Stakeholders

- Read the technical system outage report
- Explain the outage to non-technical team members (e.g., the marketing department)
- Write a brief, clear email explaining the issue, the impact, and the steps being taken to resolve it

Activity: Key Points to Translate

The problem: Database server failure due to high I/O load and misconfigured failover settings.

The impact: Users unable to log in, make purchases, or register, with slow response times and failed transactions.

The resolution: Restarted the database, switched to backup systems, fixed the I/O settings, and restored services within an hour.

Next steps: Audit the system, improve failover settings, and monitor performance to prevent this from happening again.

Adapting to Change

Why Adaptability is Essential in IT

- The technology landscape is constantly evolving
- New technologies, frameworks, and methodologies are always emerging (e.g., cloud computing, microservices, AI)
- Embracing change keeps you relevant and competitive

Where Adaptability Makes a Difference

- Learning new programming languages or frameworks (e.g., moving from PHP to Python)
- Transitioning to cloud platforms (e.g., AWS, Azure)
- Adopting DevOps culture and tools
- Adjusting to new team dynamics and remote collaboration

Lifelong Learning: The Key to Staying Relevant

- Technologies to watch: AI, Machine Learning, Blockchain, Quantum Computing
- Certifications to consider (AWS, Microsoft Azure, CISSP, CEH, etc.)
- Taking online courses, attending workshops, joining meetups

Ask an old guy!

