GeneXus

From Programmer to Consultant

E-book

GeneXus™

The sad reality of a programmer's career

In the life of programmers, there is usually a moment when they envision their future and they find it hard to see themselves in 10 or 20 years doing the same thing.

Maybe with a different technology, but still the same.

Spending endless hours behind the screen, typing lines of code, struggling with things that don't work, arguing with users, and looking for bugs that in the end are someone else's fault.
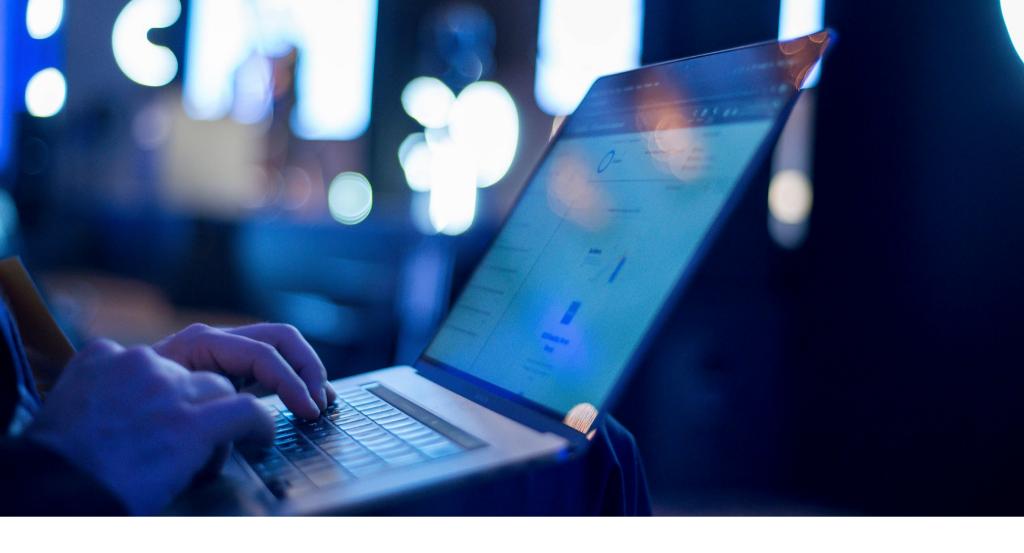
Sometimes it happens at 30, other times it happens at 40, but sooner or later we realize that we can't compete with a 20-year-old who just got out of college and was professionally trained in a currently popular programming language.

What is certain is that the same thing will happen to that youngster in the future.

At that moment, we stop in our tracks and wonder what we can do to secure our future.

To have an income stream that tends to grow and at the same time do what we love.

Often the answer is to transform professionally, to evolve our role as programmers to the next level and become **Consultants.**

What is a Consultant?

To understand how a programmer can become a consultant, we need to define what a consultant does.

In particular, what a technology consultant does.

Interestingly, a consultant is the result of leveraging some of the skills that people who are dedicated to programming have.

On one hand, a programmer must be good at logical and systematic thinking, which is what allows him or her to master programming languages.

On the other hand, what defines a great programmer is his ability to interpret reality, to understand the problem to be solved.

The latter is what characterizes a consultant: understanding reality and proposing solutions to problems without getting lost in a universe of things that do not compile or brackets that need to be closed.

Therefore, we can define a technology consultant as someone who is very good at understanding the problem to be solved and who can offer a solution taking into account the latest technological innovations.

Consultants sell solutions to problems by identifying them, and programmers sell software programs.

Transitioning from a Programming Career to a Consulting Career

The transformation from programmer to consultant does not happen overnight, but it is a process that, if undertaken carefully, can take a short period of time.

It is also true that not just any programmer will make a good technology consultant.

Certain skills are difficult to acquire in the absence of an instinctive drive.

However, we can point out which of these characteristics programmers must have in order to be consultants.

Some of these are as follows:

> Communication Skills

A consultant must have good communication skills. However, this doesn't mean that you have to be a great speaker or extremely eloquent.

Many programmers are introverted and see this as a major limitation.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Communication skills imply knowing how to listen and how to express our ideas in an accurate way.

To listen is to understand the other person's point of view, through active listening.

To communicate is to be able to express our ideas clearly, accurately and unambiguously.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, those who talk a lot are not the best communicators; instead, they are those who say only what is necessary and let others speak.

In that sense, introverts have a great advantage compared to extroverts.

Half of a consultant's job is to understand the problem and the only way to do that is to listen and ask questions.

Here are some suggestions for a programmer who wants to improve his or her communication skills:

• Use any interaction opportunity to practice active listening, that is, to relate to the other party, be part of the conversation, ask questions and make comments that add value.

• Avoid interrupting or jumping ahead of the other person. Many times the clients' problems are similar and we tend to not let them finish explaining their point, because we already know what they are going to say. It is important, for the sake of building the relationship, to let the other party talk, even if we already know their pains.

• To be fully present in conversations with other people means to leave our cell phone aside when talking to someone or, if it is a virtual conversation, avoid looking at other windows at the same time.

• Also, to be punctual for appointments and always keep our word.

• Create and send minutes of each meeting with the items that were defined to confirm them with the other side.

> Marketing and Sales

Consultants usually sell their services independently.

We have preconceptions about the concept of selling, because we associate it with manipulation and this is far from true.

To be a consultant we must offer our services, but not from a manipulative perspective, but from that of offering assistance.

The consultant has a product or service that involves a benefit to the client.

The sale involves solving a problem in exchange for a suitable payment.

In order to sell, we must be able to understand our value proposition and highlight it, and this is where marketing and sales become an aspect to consider.

Some recommendations:

• Be very clear about our value proposition as consultants and be able to convey it in a single sentence. This is known as Unique Selling Proposition.

• Understand who the client we can help is and speak to that ideal client in our communication. In Marketing, it is called "Buyer Persona" and is a representation of the person who has the problem I want to solve and is willing to pay my fee for it.

• Do not take rejection personally. When selling a product or service it is very common to receive more noes than yeses. If we take this rejection personally, we will become frustrated and we will tend to stop offering our services. For this reason, we must be aware that what is being rejected is our offering and not us.

> Technological Expertise

A technology consultant has to be fully up to date with what is happening in the technology sector to be able to apply the best solutions to his or her clients' problems.

This is a huge challenge in a highly dynamic and changing world. Every day innovations emerge that change everything.

It is impossible to focus on knowing what is going on in the world of technology and at the same time focus on understanding the client's problem, the ultimate goal of any consultant.

There is a solution to this dilemma.

Recently, the consulting firm Forrester coined the concept of low-code platform.

A low-code platform is one in which the consultant describes at a high level the solution to the problem to be solved and the tool generates the application that solves the problem using the latest technologies.

A consultant using a low-code platform has a huge competitive advantage, as he can focus on understanding the problem and building the solution without having to face the challenges of manual programming.

Another great advantage of low-code platforms is that they evolve alongside technological developments.

Often the consultant's role revolves around migration processes since many companies are stuck with legacy systems on obsolete technologies.

This is where a low-code platform is a huge advantage, as it allows taking the best of the existing system and building it on a platform that evolves over time as technology advances.

We provide a potentially future-proof solution.

How to Choose a Suitable Low-code Platform?:
Not all low-code platforms are the same, although they all share the vision that in the future they will be the first choice to deal with technological problems.

When selecting a platform there are some aspects to consider:

1. Background
By building a solution on a low-code system we are, whether we like it or not, creating a dependency relationship with this platform.

If tomorrow that system disappears, the value proposition offered to our clients as consultants will no longer be valid. Although it is impossible to predict the future, history provides some relevant insights.

A platform such as GeneXus, which has been on the market for more than 30 years, is not the same as a tool that only came to light when Gartner said that 2025 would be the turning point towards low-code.

If someone managed to survive for 30 years when they were not in fashion, they are likely to continue to do so now.

2. Cost for End Users
Many low-code platforms are free for the consultant, but later on, they are very costly for the end customer at the time of deployment to production.

Each user of the application will represent a cost for the client.

In the end, the manufacturer makes the biggest profits.

3. Multi-platform
A Low-code platform must be independent of the platforms, but it must make the most of each one.

A consultant must be able to make an App for a cell phone as a web application without going into complex technical details that distract us from our focus, which is to offer solutions.

For example in GeneXus, the same panel can be available in different sizes to asso-

ciate it with a specific resolution. It is programmed once, but specific behaviors are determined for each resolution.

4. Extensibility
The fact that a low-code platform is extensible means that it can be complemented with specific functionalities required by the problem to be solved.

Anybody who claims to be able to solve all cases is lying.

Nevertheless, being able to extend it with specific functionalities that solve specific cases generates a world of infinite solutions, since there is no problem that we cannot solve.

In summary...

Becoming a consultant is the natural evolution of the programmer who is facing the reality of his or her relevance as such.

The skills we have as programmers are a good starting point to evolve into consultants.

The consultant must develop additional skills, such as communication, marketing and sales, and continuously update his or her knowledge of technology.

The only way to keep up with technology is through low-code platforms; that is, using software to build software.

Among these low-code platforms, we must choose those that have a proven track record, that do not burden the end customer with costs, and that are multi-platform and can be extended.

Lastly...

Not all programmers will become consultants, but those who do will realize that they will work fewer hours, make more money and have a more positive impact on the world.

The consultant's path is the next level.

Furthermore, if a consultant is empowered with low-code platforms, he gains an enormous competitive advantage.

Hopefully, this guide will be helpful in this growth process.

Discover what GeneXus can do for your company.

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