

Cyber Smart Career Spotlight

BY ACTUA

MEGAN DOHERTY

SHE/HER

Security Technical Specialist, Canadian Security Top 10 under 40

I work in the technology industry under cybersecurity sales engineering. My job is to help companies secure and protect themselves against attacks with Microsoft-built cybersecurity tools. My role makes sure that the products software developers build are used to protect organizations from being hacked. I go into an organization and help people realize the value of a tool and why they should invest in it from a technical aspect. There are a lot of understanding people and research that go into being able to get someone to switch to a new product. I get to do hands-on work and help people directly with cool products, a lot of the time because they've been hacked or breached.

CYBER
SECURITY

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Describe your career path:

I completed a degree in software engineering at the University of New Brunswick. One of the biggest impacts on choosing my career path was teaching kids how to code when I was young and in university. This helped me see myself in this field. My boss was also a cool cybersecurity professional and told me about how great the field was. I also learned about careers in cybersecurity from a professor and mentor at university, but I didn't know I could work with people in security until I joined Microsoft. Originally, I never wanted a career in cybersecurity because I thought it was only for people who wanted to code and loved math. I'm so glad I was wrong!

What challenges have you faced and overcome in your career?

As a creative person, getting a degree in software engineering was very difficult. I had some learning hiccups and failed a lot of classes due to computer science being a completely different way of learning. There was a lot of imposter syndrome (where you feel you are not good enough at something even though you actually are) and I tried to figure out if I even belonged in this space early on. Your grades don't show the full picture of what you are going through and how intelligent you are. I had a career advisor at university tell me I'd never get a call back for a job in tech, two years later Microsoft reached out to me for a job. Never let someone else's opinion of you hold you back from your true potential.

What advice would you give youth about their future career paths?

You don't have to know everything all at once. I started university in mechanical engineering to build cars, and then I switched to software engineering to build beautiful technology and slowly made my way to cybersecurity. There is no wrong path and you can create your own toolbox of skills to take with you no matter where your career path starts. I strongly believe one of the best skills you can learn for cybersecurity and any other job is emotional intelligence and communication. You can learn to code by doing a class. But learning to understand and help people is a hard-earned skill you gain by working with others.

Why does diversity and representation matter in cybersecurity matter?

As a woman in cybersecurity, you see a lot of men in this field. Traditionally it's very male dominated and this can make it difficult to be heard and move up the career ladder. However, half the population are women, especially in the workforce and we have the skills and perspectives that the cybersecurity field was lacking before. We have made so many strides. My team is half women and I spend a lot of my time talking to other women in security. It's a beautiful place to be!