

IT Profile –Sye van der Veen

Occupation: Software Tester

Company: **Research in Motion Limited**

Based in Waterloo, Ontario, Research In Motion Limited is a leading designer, manufacturer and marketer of innovative wireless solutions for the mobile communications market. RIM provides solutions for seamless access to time-sensitive information, including E-mail, messaging, Internet and intranet-based applications through development and integration of hardware, software and services. RIM technology also enables a broad array of third party developers and manufacturers around the world to enhance their products and services with wireless connectivity. RIM's portfolio of award-winning products includes the RIM Wireless Handheld(tm) product line, the BlackBerry(tm) wireless E-mail solution, embedded radio-modems and software development tools. Founded in 1984 RIM operates offices in Canada, the United States and England.

What do you do?

I am a software tester for the Operating Systems Group. I'm in charge of making sure no bugs creep into OS.

How do you use computers in your work?

Computers are my work. I program various test cases for the OS and then run them using a computer. I create and maintain various documents pertaining to these tests via a computer. I communicate with the developers via email in order to ensure that bugs get fixed.

Have you developed your own software?

In order to test the OS effectively I created a testing harness that allows commands to be run on the OS while saving every action to a log on the computer. This allows for better test logs, quicker test results, and full test automation. Since the OS is the foundation of all the software on the BlackBerry, nearly everyone benefits, including the end user.

What do you like best about your work?

The atmosphere here is great; everyone's really friendly and helpful. Just a couple of months ago we had a big Superbowl party, and it was great fun (even though I don't follow football much). I also like it that I have a say in what I'm going to do day-to-day. I don't have someone constantly watching over my shoulder telling me what I should be doing and when I should be doing it.

What is difficult about your work...what are the challenges?

No matter how much you test, there is always at least one bug in any program. Because of this, my work is never really complete, nor will it ever be. The challenge is taking satisfaction in the bugs I have caught and finding new ways to catch even more next time. Also, in order to do the testing, I have to look at other people's code that might have required a lot of research on their part to create. In order to effectively test code I need to be knowledgeable about their work as well.

How long have you been using computers and software?

Ever since my parents bought me a Commodore 64 in the late 1980s. Right from the start I was fascinated with programming the computer, making it do what I wanted it to do.

What advice would you give to someone considering entering your field?

Teach yourself the computer early, it really pays off if you go to university already knowing how to program. Learn one programming language well, then go on to familiarize yourself with others; doing so allows you to pick up new languages more quickly, making you more of an asset to a company.

What does one need to know about this field?

The "internet boom" may be over, but programming is still a diverse and rewarding field. The world isn't likely to get rid of computers anytime soon, so there will always be a demand for good programmers. If you're considering a specific field in computer science, artificial intelligence (A.I.) is becoming the next big thing (you've probably interacted with some AI's in the newer video games) and has quite a few big developments left to uncover.

What do you see yourself doing in five years from now? What will your field look like?

In a couple of years I'm planning to take an MBA course at university to further my education. I considered taking a masters in computers, but felt that it would leave me in too specialized a field. An MBA allows me to stay diversified while increasing my chances of being promoted to a manager, which is a career goal of mine.

As for what the field will look like, I don't know, as computer science is a wide and dynamic field.