

JOBS

So, you want to be a Webmaster?

By Toby Chabon-Berger

Question: What does your job entail?

Answer: I'm accountable for overseeing and coordinating the Florida Atlantic University Web site, which includes maintaining and updating all Web account servers, and faculty and administrative staff accounts. Everything done online at the university falls into my area of responsibility.

I supervise department staff and implement the first two levels of the FAU home page. Maintaining the Web site requires the use of a many Web-authoring tools, such as Macromedia Dream Weaver, Adobe Photoshop and Image Ready, and Microsoft Front Page.

Three years ago, I became responsible for handling the Web site for the first live Webcast of FAU's commencement. It involved designing a Web interface with a streaming Web server.

I also coordinate the annual online student government elections and the professor evaluations for the distance-education programs. The trend toward distance learning has given me an opportunity to build Web applications for the university's online distance-learning programs.

Q: How did you get started?

A: My career actually began in the aerospace industry while I was completing my degree in finance. After graduation, I became a financial examiner for the state. I was eventually brought into the Management Information Systems (MIS) department, where I provided data administrative compliance applications for their databases.

I also became a hobbyist. When the MIS field exploded, I was ready. I was fortunate to find a profession that I really liked.

Q: What was your job search like?

A: After graduation, I used networking and the Internet to increase my contacts. The Internet postings didn't lead me to an actual job, but they did give me access to company and organization Web

OnTheJobWith



Tony Scott Parrish
University
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**Florida Atlantic
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sites in the geographical location that was important to me.

From there, I became involved with networking and relationship-building to increase my contacts. That process led me to a position opening at FAU.

Q: What do you like best about your job?

A: This is a challenging position with new and different things happening each day. Being able to problem-solve and to use my creative ability and technical skills makes each day a new and exciting one. The word "routine" is not in any of the languages we speak or use here.

Q: Is there anything you don't like about it?

A: I thoroughly enjoy my work. There are times, though, when I wish I wouldn't have to go through the chains of command to implement something new, to make a change or to solve a problem.

However, I have learned to accept this process because it exists in most large organizations and in academic environments. It is part of the job. The positives outweigh any negatives.

Q: What skills are required to perform your job?

A: My position requires strong computer language skills, exceptional communication and management abilities, and a knack for getting along with people.

Competencies in software and hardware programs are needed because I must have the knowledge base to install and work with many varieties of software programs, existing ones and new ones

Did You Know?

►The expanding integration of Internet technologies by businesses has resulted in a growing need for specialists who can develop and support Internet and intranet applications. The growth of electronic commerce means that more establishments use the Internet to conduct their business.

Source: *Occupational Outlook Handbook*

as they come into the market. That way, I am able to stay current in a rapidly changing technology to improve and enhance the Web site for our customers and the faculty and administrative users.

Q: What educational requirements are there to become a Webmaster?

A: I would encourage everyone to attain a minimum of a bachelor's degree in computer science or in Management Information Systems. However, many hobbyists often get right into certification programs without a degree and can do well.

Training to become a certified Internet Web site user includes courses and testing at all levels. As in any industry or profession, continuing education with certifications in information technology systems and project management also are helpful. I have a master's of science degree in MIS.

Q: What compensation can someone expect?

A: The compensation range at the university is \$40,000 to \$60,000. Webmasters in the private sector might make more. However, in many instances, those positions can be time-limited or are on a contract basis.

Q: What was the most satisfying experience you've had as a Webmaster?

A: In addition to the real-time, live FAU graduation experience, I have won several awards for my pro bono work evaluating other Web sites. That brings me a great deal of satisfaction, and it adds to my knowledge base.

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