



Profiles of Computer Scientists



Ross Sabolcik

**Senior Software Engineer
National Instruments
Austin, TX**

Education:

B.S. - Electrical Engineering
M.S. - Computer Science

Job Description:

Senior Software Engineer, writing software and working with electronic circuits as well as debugging problems and dealing with customers.

Advice to Students:

"Be prepared for the fast pace of innovations when you begin to work."

Video Transcript:

"A typical day, I guess when I have one I can answer that. We do a lot of different stuff. A typical day usually involves doing technical work. That's always part of a day. Writing software, debugging problems and things like that. But that doesn't necessarily mean that you sit inside your cubicle and you stare at a computer screen all day. A lot of that is working with customers, working with our support staff, working with our sales folks to try to solve problems. In addition to doing technical work, we have to do, we do documentation trying to make sure that we can convey to people how to use our products. We work with the marketing department making sure they're giving the right message to customers about what our products are and what they do. So we do a lot of different stuff."

Interview:

Ross Sabolcik is a Senior Software Engineer for National Instruments who enjoys the challenge at work. "I guess what motivates me is always learning new stuff. Every day when I walk in the door, it's really not clear to me what's going to happen." He advises students to be prepared for the fast pace of innovations when they begin to work.

Sabolcik got a bachelor's in electrical engineering and a master's in computer science. He points out, "I've been out of school about four and a half years now. And a lot of the things I learned in school are already outdated. That can be a very intimidating thing in a lot of ways, but part of what makes it exciting is that there's always new stuff coming along." How does

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Sabolcik keep up? He tries to "pick up new skills" by "reading, going to trade shows, going to conferences." But his principal strategy is to choose projects in areas he has not worked in before. He explains that by selecting a project "that's outside of what you know, you learn new stuff and become more valuable."

In order to get a taste of what it means to be an engineer, Sabolcik advises students to take part in a coop or internship. He feels he learned a great deal from his coop experience. "The thing that was valuable about it was seeing what people really do on a day-to-day basis. You can find out what people who are engineers actually do; ask them, 'What classes did you find really valuable?' or 'What skills do you think I need?' or 'What do you recommend?' The main thing is just getting feedback from people who are actually doing the work."

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