

Chenzhen, Hello.

Q. You said, *“Hi OldCoder! Please allow me to call you like this, hope you like people calling you by this name.”*

A. I'm happy to be called OldCoder. It's what I am. I've earned the title.

我是老软件开发人员

Q. You said, *“Recently I read an article, which seems to be translated from your blog, in which you talked about losing your job and have given some advise to people like you.”*

A. The “qq” article is a loose translation of an article that I wrote in 2014. The translation isn't completely accurate. I'll summarize the story here.

这是我的故事

My career proceeded as follows:

\* I attended University of California at Berkeley from 1976 to 1981. I was High Honors and Honors in two subjects, Mathematics and Computer Science.

我曾在加州大学伯克利分校 我是荣誉学生  
我赢得了荣誉

\* I was hired by a small “outsourcing” company named IPT. I worked there for 18 years, from 1981 to about 1999. There were many interesting projects.

我在 IPT 工作了 18 年

\* I did the software for a giant camera. I designed one of Adobe's printer protocols. One year, I was the only software support engineer for about 1/3 of the U.S. Vote. I fixed bugs in software that was used to launch rockets. I created word processors, compilers, assemblers, and many other tools.

有许多有趣和不寻常的项目

\* IPT was killed by dot-com rents circa 1999. I was 41 years old. I was sold to a startup named Cleanscape. They gambled on dot-com mania and lost. Cleanscape ran out of money by early 2001. Only two employees remained: me and a young Chinese marketing person named Kwok Nin Chan.

1999 年，我被卖给一家创业公司

\* I kept Cleanscape alive, as the only developer, until late 2003. Then, when the company disintegrated completely, I left. I was semi-retired. However, I worked part-time for Northrop-Grumman for about 5 years. The Northrop-Grumman job was obtained through a “connection”.

2003 年，创业公司死亡

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\* The stock market crash of 2008 wiped out my assets. It was odd to have nothing left after a lifetime. However, I rebuilt through careful investments.

2008 年，股市不景气

\* In 2011, I lost my mobility. This means that I was unable to move. I ended up in a wheelchair. However, this was temporary.

2011 年，我暂时失去了我的走路能力

\* In 2012, family members initiated litigation, lawsuits, to stop me from writing a book. I won the legal actions. However, I lost my assets again.

2012 年，家属对我起诉

\* In early 2014, I became homeless for the first time. The next 3 years were interesting. Nobody would talk to an Old Coder who wasn't working for Twitter, who had no "connections", and who wasn't a specialist in one webdev framework or another.

2014 年，我变得无家可归

但是，我继续为世界上一个地方而战

Towards the end of 2014, a con-man (clever thief) named Tarzan obtained temporary work for me. I earned \$150 per hour. I helped to restructure a corporation in the medical sector. This was a morale booster.

After that, I obtained limited database work through a "connection". It isn't clear what will happen next. I've had offers to go to China or to Germany. Perhaps I'll visit one of those countries.

Q. You said:

*"I am myself new in IT field. My bachelor's degree is in Food Safety and Quality Control, And after I graduated in 2013 , I spent 3 years struggling in different areas including logistics, Insurance, Quality Control for Coca Cola Bottling Factory. And finally I find myself a job in an IT Infrastructure integration company where I am still working since 2016."*

*"During this one year, I learned a lot of new things quickly. I am now a team leader of a small tech support team. Our job mainly focus on Enterprise Server Virtualization (VMWare,Xen,KVM), VDI, Network security, Wireless accessing, Brach Connectivity, Data Center Structuring and Cloud Computing."*

*"But when I think seriously, I find myself not digging deep in any field at all. I am not professional at any field. After I read this article today, I think I can never continue working like this."*

A. You're a professional. There's a need for what you do. However, you're not sure of what you'll become. You wonder where this job will go.

Q. You said, *"In my opinion, someone like you should never ever find it hard to get a job, not to mention a job with good salary. But this article really makes me thinking, whether it is true or not."*

A. In the U.S., to be old and in tech is considered negative. Companies say, *“We'd prefer somebody who is fresh out of school”*. It's illegal here to say this. However, they say it regardless.

I often deal with corporate attorneys over the issue. The attorneys dance around what is happening. After that, they run away. I've been granted “right to sue” (right to litigation) by the government. This doesn't change the situation.

Q. You said, *“I got my RHCE result a few weeks ago, and I am thinking about working on automated IT management in the future. Can you give me some advise on career or anything else you'd like to share?”*

A. Respected certifications, in any country, are a good start for the type of move that you're considering. RHCE, Red Hat Certified Engineer, is respected.

The advice in my original 2014 article is still valid. I'll update it as follows:

\* Broad experience, the ability to handle different situations, should be valuable. However, it isn't always respected. Focus, to some extent, on specific areas, so that people have a way to define you. In your case, RHCE is a useful first step.

\* Build associations with people. Be intelligent about this. Understand that most people are shallow. They're empty inside. If you're useful, they'll use you and walk away. My brother, the inventor of the Amazon Kindle, did this to me.

However, there is no choice. Search for associates with depth. The important part is to find people who trust you and who you can trust. Identify these people. Remain in communication with them.

\* If you're able to invest, do so. However, diversify your investments. If you're successful, take your profits off of the table. Don't let them sit or they may be lost.

\* Live a balanced life. Exercise, quiet reflection, social activities, creative works, all are important. Most important is to think about Time. Be aware of where your Time is going. Don't spend too much Time on any one thing except for short periods.

\* Medical and legal issues can be catastrophic. Be prepared to deal with them. Know your medical system, your legal system, what your resources are, and who to contact in what situation.

\* There is a proverb which states: Each person should plant a tree, raise a child, and write a book. The third is most important. If there is a book inside you, be sure to bring it to life.

\* It's a mistake to over-plan your career and life. Don't try to nail down everything in advance. However, do have a general idea of where you're headed. In your case, you're working on this. I suspect that things will work out for you.

Regards, Robert (the Old Coder)

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