iR.

ANNA NGUYEN

APRIL'S SUCCESS STORY

RELAUNCH STATS

Length of Career Break — **3 years**

Nature of Career Break — **Personal choice**

Time to Relaunch — **3 years**

CAREER TRAJECTORY

Pre-Break Employer and Job Title

Spiceworks
Software Engineer

Employer and Job Title at Point of Relaunch

IBM
Research Software Engineer Apprentice

Current Employer and Job Title

IBM
Advisory Software Engineer

ABOUT

Anna is a proud transgender woman, and currently works as an Advisory Engineer at IBM after joining IBM through the 2018 cohort of IBM's Tech Re-Entry Program. Anna has a Bachelor's degree focused in Mathematics and Computer Science from New York University.

Anna took a 3 year career break to explore a personal lifelong passion: fashion, working as a pattern maker for an up-and-coming fashion designer, and modeling in Fashion Weeks in New York City, London, Los Angeles and Kochi, India.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF ACCOMPLISHING DURING YOUR RETURN TO WORK EXPERIENCE?

I'm proud of the fact that I was able to get back up to speed and felt like I had never left, within a really short period of time. It wasn't entirely clear to me how up to date or transferable my previous experience and skills were, but as it turned out, it's just like riding a bicycle. All of the technologies that my assignments and my job required were all brand new to me at the time, all things that I had never dealt with before...a brand new environment, a new virtualization orchestration environment, a brand new programming language. However, throughout a technology career, one always is learning new things. I was glad that I was able to get the hang of things quickly and be productive and to feel like I had never left.

WERE THERE CERTAIN TRANSFERABLE SKILLS FROM YOUR CAREER BREAK THAT YOU UTILIZE TODAY?

Software engineering is still as much a science as it is an art, in that often there's no formula as to how to solve large scale problems, and one has to be imaginative in solving them. So creativity, imagination and thinking out of the box have come in handy in both my fashion and software engineering careers.

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU COULD CHANGE ABOUT HOW CAREER BREAKS ARE PERCEIVED?

I think that there is still a stigma attached to career breaks and a tendency to see them as a liability instead of an asset. The fact that there needs to be programs like the IBM Tech Re-Entry Program is an indicator of that. But I think that the break in one's career doesn't change who one is, or what one is capable of. Whatever one was doing before the break, their capability hasn't changed because of their break. If they were able to tackle challenges before, they will still be able to do the same now.

To read Anna's full success story, visit
iRelaunch's Success Story Archive!