



Digital Reinvention

How one professional used the iPhone to get back into the job market

For Mark Morton, going back to school wasn't his original plan. After being laid off in 2009, Morton took Pace University's Certificate in Adobe Web Design

and Certificate in iPhone Application Development classes. After upgrading his digital skills, Morton felt ready to jump headfirst back into the media world and landed a gig as the director of production and creative services director for Laptopmag.com and *LAPTOP Magazine*. *The Educated Observer* sat down with Morton to pick his brain about digital skills in the current marketplace, the iPhone course and his own personal reinvention.

Educated Observer: Tell me a little bit about why you decided to go back to school.

Mark Morton: Up until April 2009, I was working for a large magazine publisher, primarily responsible for the production of printed materials, but the world there was rapidly shifting toward digital. When the recession hit, a decline in advertising caused many magazines to either close completely or drastically reduce their head count. After surviving multiple rounds of layoffs, it was eventually my turn. One of the requirements to qualify for unemployment is that you have to stop by the office in person, at least once. I was dreading this, but it was the best thing I ever did. I found out that I qualified for a voucher benefit to go back to school.

EO: When did you know that you needed to upgrade your digital skills?

MM: I've always want to stay current with technology—I love to try new things. Prior to getting laid off, I was buying and managing a lot of creative services—HTML, Flash, PHP. I could see that the world of publishing was rapidly shifting from print to digital. I knew that in order to stay current, I was going to need to retrain, but between the responsibilities of my job and a growing family at home, it was difficult to find the right time. Now I realize that it's important to *make* the time, to keep yourself relevant in a changing world.

EO: How's the new job?

MM: At the moment we're rolling out the iPad edition and the digital editions—the HTML versions—making *LAPTOP Magazine* online and in the App Store. I handle the production of all of these digital media editions and applications as well as handling the production of the print magazine. I also produce the sales materials for new business presentations. That is to say I help evangelize all of the advertising opportunities and great content we have to offer. So in my new job, I'm fully transitioned into digital media applications, for a publication that's at the forefront of new technology.

EO: How would you describe the iPhone Application Development certificate class?

MM: The iPhone class gets you right in there immediately working with the core APIs, view controller, interfaces builder and provisioning the iPhone or iPad devices in real time. It's a real 'learning by doing' environment—incredibly exciting, really, an excellent window into an astoundingly powerful technology and the potential it holds. It's a lot of work—hands-on developing as well as loads of reading. But in addition to enabling me to generate my own apps, it's given me the vocabulary to productively interact with new-media specialists in my current job. Apple's iOS Platform developer platform is amazing. As I work and explore the many frameworks, I am only beginning to see all the potential functionality on the iPhone; the camera and video, Web services, excellometer compass, location, it just goes on and on. I'm hugely challenged, in the best possible way. It's really helping me see how our world is changing, how we begin to enjoy and consume information and make it part of our everyday lives.

EO: Do you own your own iPhone and iPad now?

MM: At the moment I own an iPod Touch. Work supplies me with an iPad, a 17-inch laptop and a 13-inch PC. I'm carrying around a heavy bag!

GETTING AHEAD

school as a way to find the path to becoming business owners.

But the Parsons certificate program attracts many different types of learners at varying stages in their education, Gaines said.

"The excellent dynamic of our continuing education courses is created through a mix of individuals who are actively working in the field, who are pursuing further study and who are doing the course just for their own self-enhancement, and all have a common interest in engaging in design-based education to enrich their life," she said.

Fordham University offers the unique opportunity for adults who did not finish their undergraduate education to go back to school and do so. Offered at three campuses under the Fordham umbrella—the Bronx, Lincoln Center Manhattan and White Plains—**Fordham College of Liberal Studies** is an essential piece of the puzzle for adult learners.

There are a few main reasons adult learners return to Fordham to complete their degree, said Isabelle Frank, dean of Fordham College of Liberal Studies.

"There are some who are doing it who have been successful businessmen or in some other walk of life, and they're doing it because they feel like they've never gotten that education and they feel insecure about not having that bachelor degree," she said.

Or some are first-time students who have raised a family and feel it is now their turn, she said. The Lincoln Center campus also attracts dancers and actors who otherwise have not had time for college.

The program offers the traditional majors offered at colleges today—English, history, psychology, history, political science, communications and the like. It also offers more applied degrees that have appeal to adults, such as organizational leadership and business.

And the courses are tailor-made for adult learners—meeting once a week, in the evenings or in online formats or weekend intensives.

Adult students also take a very manageable course load—one to five classes, depending on their schedules.

"They are juggling a lot because they are working as well," Frank said of the typical student. "The kind of expectations you have for traditional students who are only studying and living in dorms, you can't have for adult students. Instead of giving them 300 pages to read, you have to think how much you realistically should give them. You're covering more ground from one week to the next, and class moves faster. So the course is not watered down—and you want to get the information across and teach the analytical skills in a more intensive manner."

Most returning students initially had bad experiences in college as a teen, she said.

"Often their first experience was pretty bad—they failed out, dropped out," she said. "They started when they were 18 because everyone told them to, and they just weren't serious about it."

And the difference between an adult student who is returning to obtain the much-lauded degree and the students who dropped out years ago is like night and day.

"When they come back, they are very motivated, because they are paying for it, they make sacrifices for their time," she said. "It's different. They want to make it a success."

And this success is very fulfilling, even just to watch from the sidelines, Frank said. She names the most satisfying part of her job to "have it really work out well and see them go on to graduate school or a career or as having that bachelor's degree under their belt. It gives them a huge sense of accomplishment."

Azrieli Graduate School at Yeshiva University offers a unique opportunity in continuing education—one aimed