ROUGHLY EDITED TRANSCRIPT

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

MAINE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM ‑ THRIVE

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>> AMANDA MULLER: Hi, everyone. We still have people joining us, so we are going to hang tight for just another minute or so.

>> ERIC MEYER: That's a different one. This is the actual slide show.

>> AMANDA MULLER: You want to share it.

>> ERIC MEYER: If I try to do it as a slide show, it takes over the whole giant screen I've got. Won't let me put it on a small screen. I will share and it will have to be in standard mode.

>> AMANDA MULLER: It's up to you.

Okay.

>> ERIC MEYER: Hide that piece, don't need that really.

>> AMANDA MULLER: We have nine people.

>> ERIC MEYER: Yeah.

We lost one.

>> AMANDA MULLER: So we are working on getting up some images for you all.

>> ERIC MEYER: I'll hit the share button and see what happens.

I want to share this.

Okay.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Looks good. And so I will go ahead and start. I'm Amanda Muller the apprenticeship navigator for Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. And I have Eric Meyer with me from Thrive Networks, and he's going to be discussing the IT apprenticeship program. If you have questions, please put them in the chat or in the Q&A, and I'll monitor that, Eric, so that if there's a question, if you'd like, I can interrupt you at a ‑‑ we can pause.

>> ERIC MEYER: Any time.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Okay. Ready when you are.

>> ERIC MEYER: All right. I'm Eric Meyer the apprentice coordinator for Thrive Networks, I have a little slide show, we'll talk about this stuff and talk about Thrive and our apprentice program and talk about how you get into one of these things as someone mow may be interested in work in information technology.

So Thrive started its program about a year ago, our first hire was December of 22. So we have been at it for a little while. We are now doing apprentices in three different states, Maine, Tennessee and Florida. So I'm down here in Florida where it's warm. Just because I don't have a jacket, as you see, I'm colorful.

So what is Thrive. Thrive is basically a managed service provider. We maintain the computers for a whole group of people, clients across the world now in financial industries, regular industries, small to medium sided, medium sized and up now. We are considered to be industry experts now. We are the largest NSP in the world I can find. We now have offices in the U.K., offices in Singapore, offices in Hong Kong, Philippines, Australia, and probably more places that I don't know about. We have branches, we have 31 offices now across the United States, not including the rest of the world. As far west as Austin, Texas.

So we look to automate and control and help people not have to worry about their computers and their networks and their switches, their infrastructure.

So in order to do that, though, why we have to have a whole lot of expertise on it. Our client base is now 1700 people. We have everything you could imagine from cybersecurity to backup disaster recovery, collaboration, global pet working, help desk support. Which is a key piece of what with do. We have learned to automate, developed our own platform, up to five data centers, I think, if I recall correctly.

We are backed by a bunch of people with a lot of money. We have over 180,000 people we support on a daily basis. If you work for one of our companies, you would be the ones calling us saying my thing is broken, can you fix it, and our up to tier 5 level support would be the people that do that.

As you can see, we manage everything. You got a computer system, you got a company, we'll support and make sure you do everything right.

What is our team, this number is now 1500. When I joined a little over two years, little less than two years ago, we were 400 people, now at 1500 people. We have got probably close to 900 people that are just doing regular day‑to‑day work with clients and we have over 900 industry certifications across all of our people, that's one of the big things that we do. That was actually part of my job I build certification pathways if you want to come to a company that is looking out for your career growth, that would be us. You want to be in networking, do these certifications and do this to get a job over there. Want to work in cloud, do this, go work in cloud. Cybersecurity, that will set you up for cybersecurity. I'm the corporate trainer also. So that's kind of what I also do.

You can see there are the office locations all over the place. We are everywhere. We have a little office on the West Coast.

Now the apprentice program. What do we have? We have stopped hiring anybody for entry level into our company except through the apprentice program. So we basically bring you on, what do you have to have. You have to be breathing, is a good thing, you have to have attitude and aptitude. Experience? No, we expect you to have no experience. If you have some, that's great. Do you need certifications, no, if you need to get certifications, we'll get them. If you have them, that's great. We bring on entry level, true zero day people into our system. We do that in Miami, Sarasota, lakeland, and now in Maine, Portland, Maine, little north of Portland, Cumberland, actually. We bring you in, put you into 2,000 hours of internal training, we have related instruction with a group called ‑‑ they provide us with online instructional resources for you to use in the program, which takes about a year to run through.

We certify you in your a plus and net plus and a couple of other things, mainly tools we use and beginning Microsoft Azure stuff. We have networking cybersecurity and networking management as pathway to the grow. You spend a year in the apprentice program, hired as a full‑time employee and then you can go off and do whatever you want. We will introduce you as part of the program all the things that we do.

We have on the job training, a lot of that you will be assigned to mentor if you work with us. As a mentor you'll get someone to work with you day by day to help you learn all the things you have to know. Why? Because we have a very diverse client set, each group of engineers is called a pod and we have many pods all over the country. You can physically be in Maine and be assigned to a pod that deals with Texas or Canada or global ‑‑ we got global U.K. pod we started putting apprentices into. You have to learn those clients, their tools and how to interpret their problems so you can solve them or write them up for the more advanced technicians to solve them. Classroom instruction, that's I talked about with the mentoring. We do pay, I think if I remember correctly, Maine starts at $17.20. It's not high pay, but it is an apprentice program. You're expected to go learn. At the end of the year, you should be making $20 an hour and eligible for career paths and other spots that make more. We have talked about the certification. Check‑ins, we check in on you all of the time. That's my job. I'm always available for my apprentices, they reach out all the time with questions and things they need to have answered for them.

So you are a full‑time employee, if you get hired with us. You are ‑‑ you get health care, 401k, vacation days and more, you are a full employee. The only thing tagging you as an apprentice is a small piece of your title. You have to complete all the paperwork, work within the program requirements, and come to the office. We find that apprentices learn better when sitting side by side. That was what we are.

So you're there for a year, after a year, you can go remote depending on what your manager wants you to do.

How do you get into my program, quite simple, send me your resume. Once I have a resume in my hands, I'll read it, as long as you seem like an interesting individual, which is generally most everybody because I find people interesting, I'll hand you off to a recruiter, they will contact you, arrange an interview, will interview you with myself and what we call a service delivery manager. These are the guys that run groups of engineers, will interview you, if hired you come on board, takes about two to three weeks for the whole process, more or less. Then you start in the office and you work.

>> IAN GINGRAS: We just got a question in the Q&A.

>> ERIC MEYER: Yeah.

>> IAN GINGRAS: The question is can I still be in school and do this program.

>> ERIC MEYER: Well. Maybe. Being in school will not restrict you from being part of the program, but you do have to come to the office Monday through Friday 8:00 to 5:00. If you're in a permit that allows you to go on Saturdays or evenings or online in the evening, works perfectly well. We don't, unfortunately have the ability to say, come to work part‑time go to school part‑time because we have 2,000 hours of training as part of the apprentice program to get you through. And that requires you to be in the office.

>> AMANDA MULLER: If this person is in high school, the schedule is not going to be compatible.

>> ERIC MEYER: Graduate high school, please and then come on.

Honestly, if year graduating this year, not sure when Maine's high school ends, may or June.

>> AMANDA MULLER: I thought it was June.

>> ERIC MEYER: When you're getting close to ending, send us a resume and we'll talk to you, more than likely we'll have an opening in Maine.

It's a lovely office, by the way, actually built by a medical supplier and they really ‑‑ they poured money into it and never used it. We lease it and it's a gorgeous office. Sit‑stand desks, everything.

Anybody else?

>> AMANDA MULLER: Not so far.

>> ERIC MEYER: I'm in ‑‑ it's cold up here, 76 here in Miami.

>> AMANDA MULLER: It was 4 degrees this morning.

>> ERIC MEYER: No, no. 4 degrees is for my ice cream.

So anyway, apprentices are wonderful. Right now I've got 47 apprentices. So we are probably one of the larger apprentice perhaps in the country. We actively train. It's a constantly evolving program and we are getting better at this day by day, trying to figure out how best to manage this many people and put people in the right spots. I spent half of my day today hiring new people and talking to managers. So this is a ‑‑ this is a ‑‑ apprentice is not just mine, I have to highly recommend them. The push has been go to college get a degree. My answer to that, if that's not your way, then trades are lovely. There are tons of apprentice programs in Maine. The office there has lots of linkages to all kinds of things, find something that you think you'll enjoy doing. Go before I give it a run for your money. They need electricians and plumbers. Welders too. Some of these trades are harder as you get older. Save the IT stuff for later.

Otherwise, yeah, IT.

I like it because I get to sit inside in the air conditioning all day long. Or I can go out on the my back porch on nice days and carry the laptop outside.

Does anybody here want to go into IT?

Anybody?

>> AMANDA MULLER: Yes.

>> ERIC MEYER: What do you want to do?

Networking, cloud, cybersecurity, what are you interested in the IT area.

>> AMANDA MULLER: If you like, I can turn your ‑‑ unmute you if you want to chat otherwise you can type in the chat. It's up to you, Cameron.

Hang on, I'm trying to ‑‑ yes, give me a second. I have a thousand windows open. Okay.

>> ERIC MEYER: I used to be a college professor and before Thrive took me away from teaching college, so I have a long career in education. Before that I worked for an insurance company, systems analyst and systems architect. Before that in the U.S. Navy flying planes off of carriers, before that a photographer in college. So, you know, I would say find what makes you happy and go do it. When you're no longer happy, go for it.

>> CAMREN: Right now I still am in high school. When I get out of high school I plan on doing something related to networking or something on the lines of that area.

>> ERIC MEYER: We have a networking department. You do the year worth of training with our apprentice program and some of our apprentices end up in the networking department doing networking stuff. It's a doable thing.

>> CAMREN: I've been doing IT for a while now. Couple of years at this point.

>> ERIC MEYER: Cool. If you run a windows computer, you're always doing IT.

>> CAMREN: Yeah, I have had my fair use with windows.

>> ERIC MEYER: I'm a Unix guy, have been for a long time. How is artificial technology impacting the work you do? It's not impacting my work at all. Education, they keep trying to put artificial intelligence into education. I think maybe some day, if it gets smart enough, it will take over, but as they've been finding out, COVID taught us a lot of lessons about teaching. Teaching students from an artificial intelligence, because they had tons of those across the country, did not succeed.

People liked the interaction with people. They preferred the classroom generally speaking but take Zoom‑type calls as a secondary choice.

Now a lot of people are choosing Zoom over the classroom. That's just the nature of that.

I don't see a computer easily solving the problems that we have to solve because it's a person on the phone that's saying this is broken, and then you have to spend an inordinate amount of effort to say what they mean by this. Without precise ‑‑ without precise wording, if you've ever had to help someone who was not into the technology of the game or the whatever you were trying to help them with and saying click the red button and they don't see a red button anywhere, even though it's the biggest button on the screen, that's what it's like being on the help desk. I'm not sure how artificial intellectual will help that.

>> AMANDA MULLER: This is Amanda. I had thoughts about when is AI going to take my job. Judging by how smart it is right now, I don't think I have to worry about that for a little while.

>> ERIC MEYER: You have a few years. Most of the stuff people talk about in artificial intelligence is called generative AI, it generates answers off of that. What has yet to be injected into this is a sense of truth. Generative AI Willie and make stuff up to make it fit what you asked it for. For example, if you say I need a research paper about blah, blah, blah, showing this, this, it will generate a research paper that reads amazingly well and generate the I takings and most of ‑‑ citations will not exist. It knows how to make a citation and throws one. Chat GPD. Something dreams, the art one, that takes art and generated something from somebody else's stuff. Generative AI is interesting. I think it has potential. I use it all the time. What do I do? I actually give it ‑‑ you have to learn how to write a decent prompt. If you can write a decent prompt, you can get it to do 60 percent of the work for you, that's when the brain takes over and you say let me take this as a starting point and turn it into something that is actual real and good.

So it will save me, you know, I don't know, three or four hours of work. South makes my work easier, but does not take away the work.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Can you talk ‑‑ can you discuss a little bit about what you mean when you say aptitude and attitude? What skills and traits specifically are you looking for in an apprentice.

>> ERIC MEYER: I look for someone who really wants to be in the IT field. May not know exactly where but definitely want to and show it by spending time beforehand doing something to make themselves better in IT. For example, the apprentices that come to me that already have A plus that wasn't demanded by a school class because they needed that to the a job. That shows me they are willing to spend their own time and effort to learn something new. I need people to be able to learn.

Aptitude, they like to solve problems and show it by solving problems in their real life. Worked a job ‑‑ we ask these questions, have you ever had to work with something that was tilt and what did you do? Show us your thought process. Attitude, I'm nice, friendly, get along with other people and know how to answer questions, I know how to ask questions, because we always give apprentices a chance to ask if they have any questions. And they know how to go out and I find information and have a desire to learn. If you have a desire to learn and demonstrate that, that's what I mean by attitude and aptitude.

Of course, fogging the mirror means you're still alive, which is a plus.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Eric, can you talk a little bit about if you can think of any ‑‑ some common misconceptions about this kind of work. I can kind of just throw one example out there.

I feel like a lot of young people develop an interest in computer and IT occupations because ‑‑ not only because they like technology, they spend time on computers but also because they believe this is a career where they won't have to deal with people that they can get on a computer, be by themselves all day and not have to talk to anybody. Can you talk about the level of interaction, at least with an entry level apprentice and down the line a little bit toward the pathways of those more skilled positions.

>> ERIC MEYER: I've worked in IT for a good chunk of my life. I like people, which is how I got to the systems arrangement text side of things, I like talking to people, getting things built, the back and forth part. I don't know of a ‑‑ more than a small handful of jobs where you don't have to deal with people.

Now you don't always have to deal with clients or customers, but you're always responding to the need and the desires of someone in a company to get something done. Because that's the whole point of IT. The whole point of the computer field is to make work happen.

So you'll get people requesting things all the time, reports, writings, adjustments, all kinds of stuff.

That perception that you can work in a cubicle and no one will bother you easy curious, I've never seen that. Someone is always going to bother you.

One of the big misconceptions, there are two of them nowadays, I can work cybersecurity, all I have to do is get this certification and I'll be making $125,000 a year as a cybersecurity penetration expert and that's not the truth.

Schools like to teach the really fun toys, all the fun stuff, and it's good, but it's this much of the field. It's a very narrow slice. The field of cybersecurity is exceptionally large, you need a lot of skills to go do that.

So you're not going to be hired making 125,000 a year, the average starting salary for cybersecurity depending upon where you are in the country is somewhere around 45 to 55. Maybe if you're lucky, you may know people that have gotten more because of the area, or they have better skills or they interviewed well or they had the right certification. But generally speaking, that's a misconception. When you see all the value ease they attach to cloud and cloud architecture, cybersecurity, all the big numbers, they're giving you the average across a 20‑year career path. They are giving you closer to about a ten‑year skilled employee with experience.

So take that with a grain of salt. You have to work with people and you have to start somewhere at the bottom to build the foundational skills you need to work in the areas you want to work.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Thank you for saying that, Eric, because I know that when we are ‑‑ haven't been in the work force before or very long, it's hard to tell where ‑‑ what's entry level and how long does it take to make good money in your career.

I do have ‑‑ camren wants to say something. Unmute yourself.

>> CAMREN: Right now I have school and I'm doing this other tech school every other day. I'm working on getting a plus certification. So I'm currently a junior. I don't know if I said that. But ‑‑ so every other school day, I go to this tech center thing where we are ‑‑ we're going to be getting our A plus certification provided by the school.

>> ERIC MEYER: Okay, good.

>> AMANDA MULLER: A Plus is part of the apprenticeship. Let's say he becomes an apprentice, already has A plus, he wouldn't have to did again.

>> ERIC MEYER: No. As long as you come with a valid one. Ian asked a question. Black hat and white hat in IT. It really comes from an old cartoon from Mad magazine is where it comes from, the black hatted spy and white hatted spy where the black hat was the bad guy and the white hat was the good guy. If you want to take it further than that, comes from Cowboy westerns from the 50s in the movies where you can could always tell who the good guy was. But in the IT industry, especially when it comes to cybersecurity and that kind of stuff, it really means the bad guy is the black hat, the guy trying to break into your systems to do bad things, be it steal data, steal information, get money out of you, the white hat is someone who does the same techniques as the black hat but to find a way to Harden the system so the black hat guys can't break in. That's a general overview of what it is. They still exist.

>> AMANDA MULLER: I have another question, Eric. Can you ‑‑ can you tell me a little bit about what cybrary training looks like.

>> ERIC MEYER: It looks like anything else you've seen, closer to a YouTube, you have lectures and quizzes and stuff built into it to practice specific things, like a plus or net plus or se C+ or ITIL. These are certifications you can go so you have everything from slide show lectures. You can think visit as t aI: Us lecture for a squeal. They put a video set together in a package, put a class flame on it and put other tools in there to track and help you get through the course work so you'll pass the certification.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Self‑paced modules.

>> ERIC MEYER: Self‑paced.

>> AMANDA MULLER: I do have another question. Can you tell me in what ways is apprenticeship a better option or differs from doing a college program? Let's say someone is working on their associate's degree or deciding to get their associate's degree or do an apprenticeship in IT. What would you advise.

>> ERIC MEYER: Be an old educator, get a college degree, no one can ever take that away from you. What this gets you more than anything is a leg up on the college people, is experience, you come to the apprentice program, get experience and certifications, you can refine what it is you think you want to do for call it a career path, a lifetime. And then you can go back to school and, unlike the average college student that comes and says I want to do something in IT because I'm good with computers, what do you mean you're good with computers. I fixed my mom's remote control. So it's good to have that kind of skill set, but you have to know exactly why wrote you want to go, to take the right class to see have deeper understanding of the things you want to do when you get down the road a little piece.

So neither path is better, per say. The experience path will help you get a leg up on other people. If you get the experience and then the college degree at the same time and say hey, I don't want to do this anymore, I have the degree for this, but I have some experience, you you're applying with 3 to 5 years and not looking for true entry level, you're looking for more experienced roles, which eventually makes you more money.

>> AMANDA MULLER: I think getting the experience is kind of the hard part, right? Because we do see individuals who have a degree, like an associate's degree, who are not able to get entry level work in IT. At least in what their degree is because the position might require a little bit of experience already.

So.

>> ERIC MEYER: There aren't too many jobs anywhere that say, no experience needed. And most people that go to the jobs that say no experience needed really say but you don't have enough experience. I just interviewed a young lad today who has been applying to all the IT jobs around the area that say entry level. Every single one of them wanted experience which makes them not entry level.

So getting experience, getting the ability to see how things really work help you decide a little bit better to refine your course. Otherwise IT is everything, the old Venn diagrams, IT is everything computer. Maybe you wanted to go into generative AI and/or networking, maybe you wanted to go into cybersecurity and focus on this area of cybersecurity. That's what experience gets you, at least a taste of what it is you can narrow your field down, and then if you couple that with college, get the course level stuff, something that nobody talks about is one of the fundamentals that we have the hardest time with, and that's every industry, is ability to read and write well. You have to be able to express yourself well in the English language in America and writing because how do I know the case? I read your notes. If I can't decipher what you wrote, you're not effective. The basic skills of grammar and English in college, those are important things to do.

Most colleges now have a class called speech, which teaches you how to talk in front of others. If you can talk in front of people, you have a leg up from the ones that can't do anything. Being able to talk and write clear i, these are skills you need to have to progress in any career path.

So get those, get the technical skills too, because it's not just technical skills, it really is not just technical skills. Having just technical skills and missing out on the other stuff, puts you into a niche and you stop progressing, nobody knows what to do with you at that point.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Ian had a question.

>> ERIC MEYER: If you don't have a work history, you can get tons of experience, do it on your own, there is nothing that prevents you from getting your own certifications and find your local community center, find your local ‑‑ if you're religiously affiliated, find that and say guess what, after church, or whatever temple, bring me your computer, I'm learning how to fix them, I'll help you out. You can start your own little business, you don't have to charge much because you're still learning, don't have to charge anything. Find nonprofits that need help, see if they can get you into the system doing things.

One of my students started with a nonprofit helping them ‑‑ they were being gifted lots of computers and didn't know what to do we things and they eventually threw up their hands and said we don't want to deal with this. He started his own business recycling computers. He would take the old ones and rebuild them and sell them for cheap for people that needed a computer f their kids. Now running a very good business down here.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Awesome ideas.

>> ERIC MEYER: You can find experience by just poking around and seeing where there's a need.

I will tell you right now, if you've ever heard the term 12:00 flashers, they can't set a clock because it's electronic. You could be a handy person. I'll come by and set up your tv for you.

You know, do you need help deciding what to get your kid for Christmas that's electronic, let me help you with research choices. If you have you want to go crazy, do the Instagram and Tik Tok thing. Toy recommended for kids ages 5 to 7 having looked at all the stuff.

Go crazy.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Eric, can you kind of give a brief synopsis of what it looks like, like a regular day for an apprentice at Thrive.

>> ERIC MEYER: Depends. If you're early in your career, early at the apprentice stage, you're probably going to spend a third or more of your day studying. There's tons of material I give the apprentices to read and understand, and so in the beginning, you spend about half your day doing the reading and half your day following a mentor. You'll spend for two months ‑‑ maybe ‑‑ we maybe shortening that up, spending some time in the call center, shows you the basics of how to use the ticketing system, how to use the tools we use, how to de‑escalate. When someone's stuff is broken and they're calling you, they're never very happy about it and it's your fault for not fixing it before it's broke.

Once you get past that, you learn how to do what's called coordinating, which means we have a whole ticketing system that gets the calls that comes in. It says this need to go to somebody, you pull the case down, rewrite it, figure out who it belongs to and route it to the engineer that will solve the problem and roughly about seven or eight months in, take over some of the simple trouble shooting, spending most of your day trouble shooting tickets as they come in.

It varies from a lot of study to less study all the way down here until you're doing the job. When you finish up, you're doing the job and you're ready for a ‑‑ mow progresses to a different career. Tier 2.

So that's a typical day, we don't spend a whole lot of time in meeting, we have a standup meeting in the morning, this is the state of the world, you'll have hopefully weekly one on ones with your manager to say how are you doing, what do you need, this is what we are seeing and just keep you on track. That's pretty much an apprentice life, study, get certifications, learn the job.

>> AMANDA MULLER: And Eric, can you talk a bit about how Thrive supports and works with applicants ‑‑ I'm sorry, apprentices with disabilities.

>> ERIC MEYER: We actually don't have a whole lot of disabled apprentices. The only one we have is completely blind, we have him in the office. And he's proving to be a challenge because so many of our tools are not what I would call ADA compliant. So what do we do? Is I stick him in different job spots around the company to see if there's ‑‑ if the tools they use are supported by the tools that he uses. We have turned on all the accessibility features of our main system for tracking. The so we try to find a place for everybody. If we think you can do the job, we'll give you a chance. We work with people that have issues. The only one we have had so far is visual, but that hasn't been ‑‑ no one has complained yet. I've moved him to three different spots. A fourth one to try him in, just to find the best niche for something he wants to do that we have the tools to support him.

As long as you can do the job, it's not a problem, we'll find a spot for you.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Excellent. Did anybody else have any questions? I think I've exhausted through all my questions.

>> IAN GINGRAS: I have one. Are there any common tools that are used for accessibility for somebody who does want to get into IT.

>> ERIC MEYER: I'm not familiar with a lot of them. The big one I know is Jaws for the screen reader. He had a secondary tool that converts messages and screen shots to Braille on the keyboard he could read. Those are the two that I have. But I haven't ‑‑ we haven't ‑‑ we haven't had a whole lot of disabled or partially abled people to try new things on. But ‑‑ if you can work on a computer, then you can pretty much do the jobs. The trouble we had with JAWS is one of our big tools, remote access are tool, you remote access into another machine, the screen that it shows I see a video screen to your computer, and the JAWS device doesn't know how to read that video. We are working around all that.

>> AMANDA MULLER: This Amanda. Why I do want to say that if we have ‑‑ if there is an applicant or an apprentice who is working for Thrive or another IT company and is a client of vocational rehabilitation, vocational rehabilitation can and will work with that apprentice and with the employer to, you know, try to figure out if there is an accommodation that would enable them to perform their job adequately. So sometimes it will take some time to figure out what's needed, but we certainly have people that can assess and, you know, see what could help. We have IT staff, too, that are ‑‑ have some special training in accessibility too.

>> ERIC MEYER: The biggest problem has not been with technical support. This one is in Florida. The biggest problem is the field of accessibility tools are not robust enough to handle the environment of some of the functional tools that we have to use.

So we are having ‑‑ for example, the screen readers typically don't handle pop‑ups very well. If you're in a form and you click a drop arrow, if it's a pop up, the screen reader doesn't know it exists, we have worked with JAWS and other people trying to figure out how to get around them. Yes, I have no issues with anything. I mean, I will figure out a way and work with people, I'll give anybody a chance for the most part. Yeah.

>> AMANDA MULLER: I think that shows ‑‑ it speaks to how technology is  ‑‑ it's always evolving, but there's always issues with it. You have to be patient and have to be someone who is willing to try everything, right? And work with other people. Okay, that didn't work, try this. That didn't work. Being determined and being patient, you know, I think that's ‑‑s are some traits you'll see in good IT people.

>> ERIC MEYER: I've had to point out to vendors, you can't ‑‑ vendors you can't put everything in red and green. What if they're color blind, maybe put a shape on it.

User interface design is a mental hobby of mine. I find we haven't kept up with the needs of people. There are a lot of people that have limitations that we should be addressing. To me the ADA requirements should be almost mandatory for any commercial piece of software out there. But nobody is making them do it.

>> IAN GINGRAS: Mind if I ask a quick question. If the ADA easy mandatory, why isn't it being really enforced, it sounds like.

>> ERIC MEYER: To make it even forcan, someone has to file a complaint. To get the ADA enforced requires you to go to court, which means you need to have a lawyer that will fight for you. So that's ‑‑ the commercial software for ‑‑ having dealt with it from a school side, I'll speak from the school side more than ‑‑ the school side has a lot of rigorous enforcement through financial aid. Oh, you're not complying with the ADA, we'll stop giving you money. There's a huge incentive on that side to fix things. In the commercial world, the employee can't work in that environment, we made a reasonable accommodation, and they can't do the job, it's gone. It's the perception of humans as widgets as opposed to actual people that make it a problem, I think.

And honestly, you need to find a lawyer with deep pockets that wants to go after people.

Most team don't want to sue the company they work for, but that's kind of what it takes in the long run, you got to sue the company you're working for, sue the provider of the systems, they have to get it fixed, which can take years. In the meantime, you know, you don't have a job. Now you're known as a trouble maker and don't get a job.

I think that's part of it, opinion, soap box.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Thanks Eric. Did anyone else have any questions?

Well, I hope that was really informative and had a lot of useful information for everybody.

I ‑‑ if anyone has questions about Thrive, about the apprenticeship, would you suggest they reach out to me so I can be your contact, okay.

So I'm going to put my e‑mail, if you tonight already have it, my e‑mail in the chat.

And if you have questions, you can direct those to me and I can get answers for you if I don't have them, I can get them for you, if I know the answer, I can share that with you.

Okay.

>> ERIC MEYER: I encourage everybody, find an apprentice program, go for it. If you're still in high school, finish high school and keep working on that. That's just proof you can keep your head down and finish. And then find something that looks like fun. I've had a lot of careers in my life, the mantra of pick one thing and do it for the rest of your life, if you can do that, that's amazing, I truly admire people who can do that. If you're like me, keep finding new stuff, keep learning and growing.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Let me turn my video back on.

Okay, everybody, well, we still ‑‑ we are finishing off with 15 minutes to spare. So I'll give you your time back, and I really appreciate you all coming and learning today and really appreciate you, Eric, for coming and answering questions.

And hopefully we can get some more interest in IT.

Thanks, everybody.

>> ERIC MEYER: Thanks, everybody.

>> AMANDA MULLER: Have a good evening.

>> ERIC MEYER: Have a great weekend, do well.