'A Day in the Life' of an IT Consultant

1) Please give a brief description of what you do & the company you work for?
IT Consultant – GlaxoSmithKline I work to find solutions, improvements, and ways forward.

2) What does your average day entail? Where do you work? (Environment - Office, home, studio etc.) What is your work pattern? (full time/part time etc) What are the main activities during your day? (i.e. meetings, emails, practical tasks, visiting clients etc)
Mail, meetings, instant messaging, programming, fixing broken hardware, directing others to do work, providing guidance to others doing work, developing myself, training, reading technical articles, talking to people face to face.

Office worker, but can work from home when I need to. Meetings with Malaysia can be early morning, and the US can be late evening. Starting by 07:00 UK and still being online at 00:00 UK is not uncommon.

Working from home may seem like a great idea but it can make it difficult to actually stop work.

3) What skills and qualification are required for your role?
When I started, none particularly, other than showing an aptitude. These days you'll likely need a min 2:1 degree with experience, or get accepted onto an apprentice programme.

4) What do you enjoy most about your job? What are you least favourite aspects of your job? Variety, challenge, and the very clever people you get to work with. The bad bit… there are times of significant, very significant stress.

5) What were your favourite subjects at school? Why? Do these link/relate to the job you do now?
Maths, physics and chemistry. They got me a job as an Analytical Lab Technician. The lab had a computer. I wrote a game. I started writing lab based programs. I got a job in the computer department. I found my perfect job.

6) How did you get to where you are now? (i.e. academic routes, professional development, career opportunities)
CSE's and O'Levels. Failed A levels. Tech Sciences at East Herts College Turnford. Advanced Tech Sciences at Hatfield Poly. Dumped the advanced tech when moved to computer science job. Went back to Hatfield Poly to do a 5 year day release degree. 2:1 Hons. Left school at 18. Finished degree at 25. My pay went stellar. I've been made redundant, worked as a contractor, run my own company, gone back to permanent employment, been outsourced and been insourced. Just retirement to go.

7) What advice would you give to our aspiring students who are interested in pursuing a career in your profession?
You have to become an SME, Subject Matter Expert. Know your subject front to back, top to bottom, left to right, right to left and diagonally. Learn that no question is a stupid question unless you've intentionally made it stupid. So you don't do that. Learn quickly… an

exponential learning curve is good. Vertical take-off is better. Talk confidently. Don't waffle and don't make it up. If you don't know… ask.

8) In your current profession what are the potential development and progression opportunities?
They are everywhere, but you need to learn to spot them and to ask for them, don't sit and wait for someone to hand you an opportunity... you may well be disappointed. Look at things others don't want. I've taken a number of tasks that were process oriented rather than tech oriented and which no one else wanted to touch. Those actually turn out to be things that senior management pay close attention to because they have the ability to release man power and make people more efficient.