

Interview with Ryan Foster

Tech Lead at NNWC

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Interview Reflection: Ryan Foster, Civilian Tech Lead at NNWC

For my professional interview, I selected Ryan Foster, our civilian Tech Lead at the NNWC department. Ryan supports Navy operations through his duty to monitor endpoint transport, applications, mobility and Navy Endpoint Protection teams. I chose to interview him because of his technical leadership and the example he sets as a civilian operating within a highly classified, military environment. His method of combining modern techniques with organized frameworks and guidance creates the essential balance which results in successful cloud infrastructure and cybersecurity operations for DoD roles.

The Cloud Engineer position at Endpoint Transport under Ryan's direction enables me to witness his professional work style together with his outstanding ability to solve complex problems. Ryan connects his experience as a civilian to military operational needs to create technical solutions which fulfill security standards and prepare forces for deployment. The interview provided essential information about Azure enterprise

management success requirements while demonstrating to leaders their path to success through continuous learning and adaptability to change.

- How did you get into the IT field and into the position you now hold?

Ryan Foster responded that he started his technological journey when most children were still playing with toys. He re-built computers from spare parts at the age of five. Ryan's first breakthrough was at 9 years old when his grandfather brought him to his work. Their main server was down after several technicians failed to fix it. He spent about 15 minutes and figured out a networking configuration issue, getting it running. He also stated that he developed his programming skills by creating basic applications and dedicating himself to finding automated solutions for repetitive tasks. His career path followed with the purpose of creating better system designs which would minimize human mistakes brought him to enterprise IT work which later evolved into cloud engineering when he focused on developing systems that used automation and scalability.

Ryan has worked on the Navy cloud transition initiative since he joined the Navy five years ago. He started with a small pilot group to create cloud-based services which the Navy could use operationally. That first small project became a large infrastructure project which provided services to thousands of Navy users. The project needed his technical expertise together with his skill to manage communication between military personnel, contractors and leaders from different commands. The result produces an enterprise network which operates under secure management through Azure infrastructure to support business operations.

- What would be the most important knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by someone in this field?

Ryan identified problem-solving and perseverance as the fundamental knowledge skills needed to succeed in this field. He explained that all technical professionals must deal with situations which include system breakdowns and network interruptions and regulatory barriers that seem impossible to overcome initially. Engineers who succeed through their work believe that all problems have solutions which can be implemented. The process of perseverance requires continuous effort until the correct solution becomes operational in DoD systems which depend on both speed and precision for their mission success. His perspective resonated heavily with me; The hybrid endpoint transport system requires me to solve complex routing problems which occur between NMCI and Nautilus environments because security policies determine all diagnostic procedures. Patience and persistence have been crucial not only technical but also emotional tools. Ryan established that developers face their toughest obstacles which create essential development opportunities for them to develop their skills to handle difficult situations.

- What are some of the 'soft' skills you have found to be most important in this position?

Ryan identified communication as the important soft skill which he needs to perform his duties. As a civilian working with military and non-military teams, he regularly translates complex Azure configurations, security issues, and automation workflows into language accessible to leadership and operational users. His ability to explain technical

systems in simple but reliable terms helps ensure mission objectives are met without delay or misunderstanding.

Ryan also stressed that teamwork and project management and flexibility need to be part of the system. Teamwork helps different teams including developers and security experts and operations personnel to stay in sync during their work on infrastructure migrations and incident responses. Project management system enables him to organize tasks and follow rules while working under tight timelines while his teams stay adaptable because of their flexibility to ongoing technological developments.

These qualities reminded me that technical ability alone cannot drive project success. In my own work, as I handle dynamic Intune and Azure VPN tasks, communicating effectively with military POCs and contractors is as crucial as the solution itself. Ryan's example demonstrated that clarity and empathy often turn technical exchanges into lasting professional trust, a necessary soft skill in defense innovation.

- What technical skills have you found are the most important in this position?

Ryan detailed all technical competencies which leaders need to operate Azure enterprise systems successfully. He started by identifying Azure core service expertise which includes virtual machines and virtual networking capabilities with subnets and peering and NSGs and Azure Storage and Entra ID for identity management. These elements serve as fundamental components which enable Navy systems to achieve both security and scalability. He explained that PowerShell and Azure CLI function as fundamental automation tools which help organizations automate resource deployment

and manage across their wide infrastructure networks through standardized operational procedures. Security needs to pass through all technical layers according to him because it requires access control and firewalls and encryption and role-based identity governance.

Ryan also mentioned that the system includes monitoring and analytics tools which Azure Monitor and Log Analytics provide to help engineers detect performance problems and maintain regulatory requirements. The Navy uses a hybrid cloud model because it requires on-site infrastructure connections to cloud-based systems to fulfill its present objectives. Docker and Kubernetes serve as new standards for handling microservices through their containerization capabilities which support big deployment environments. The environments he described would allow future engineers to lead modernization efforts according to his assessment.

- What would be good entry-level jobs for gaining experience to become a Cloud Tech Lead?

Ryan recommended securing a position as a junior system administrator or helpdesk technician or cloud support engineer. NNWC uses these entry-level positions to teach employees basic technical skills which include solving network problems and learning about system connection points. He also encouraged focusing on early certifications such as Microsoft Certified: Azure Administrator (AZ-104) certification which stands as their priority. He also recommended moving toward AZ-500 certification for architectural and security specialization. He explained that certifications establish guidelines, yet professionals need to use their learned concepts every day when working with actual

systems to achieve true expertise. The operational awareness gained through Intune and BMC Helix and VPN diagnostics systems enables organizations to develop enterprise-level decision-making capabilities.

Ryan described career growth as a progressive staircase which requires employees to develop both their technical abilities and their soft skills including patience and leadership and responsibility. Leaders who want to succeed need to maintain consistency and accountability because their path to success requires them to avoid seeking immediate power.

When asked what qualities he searches for in potential full-time hires, Ryan stated that the organization requires employees who can solve problems and learn new things while having Azure security and automation expertise to ensure system availability through exact configuration management. The team requires effective communication abilities to perform handoffs while they need to sustain dependable operations for Navy critical missions, and they must acquire abilities to deal with new security risks and AI surveillance technology. The combination of AZ-104 and AZ-500 certifications with incident response soft skills including collaboration and critical thinking abilities helps candidates to become more competitive.

In conclusion, my interview with Ryan Foster provided me with both motivation and career goal clarity because he demonstrated that cybersecurity and cloud engineering success depends on technical skills and three additional essential elements which include ongoing education and ethical behavior and teamwork. His experience as a civilian leader

showed that system management requires leaders to understand human factors and organizational goals and security threats which continue to evolve. Also, the interview showed me that my work with routing and endpoint transport enables the Navy to achieve its digital transformation objectives which unite systems for operational success. Ryan demonstrated how civilian experts connect national defense to innovation through their development of secure advanced solutions which result from precise teamwork. His journey from building novice to respected leader made me want to build my technical abilities and leadership competencies which will enable me to generate major value for NNWC and my upcoming professional duties.