

## Phil's Career Progress and Influences

When I was young, I, Philemon, used to want to become an engineer. But as I grew older, I realized that my curiosity was pushing me towards sciences instead of the practicality of engineering. So, I decided to venture into chemistry, and this informed my choice of industrial Chemistry undergraduate studies. However, after graduation, I realized that opportunities in the manufacturing sector were few, and where they were available, the pay was too low compared to the alternatives including freelance digital jobs in the academic writing industry which was booming in the 2010s. So, I spent 8 years after graduation working in the academic writing industry. I was, and still am, an exceptional academic writer. I can guarantee you an A+ in your nursing, psychology, medical sciences, and business assignments. I once supported a client to complete academic assignments from their first year to their final year and they graduated with a first-class degree in Nursing (BSN). I also became a mentor for the academic writing consulting company that I was working for. I was put in charge of a sort of quality assurance role where I had to go through and ensure all papers delivered by my team of writers met high-quality expectations in terms of accuracy and grammar.

So, the role I occupied boomed and I made decent money, I mean decent enough to secure me some small land, build me a house, and even buy me my first car. Now, the dirty stuff hit the fan when Covid came and the global academic system went into hibernation. Orders available to work on reduced even as online learning continued across the world. Sometime around 2021, the usual peak season that was characterized by tens of orders did not materialize and the regular customer requests dwindled. My agency resorted to some kind of fair work distribution system where orders available were rationed to ensure all their writers at least got something to work on. This rationing worsened in 2022 and even took a policy direction in 2023 where ranking systems were introduced to deny all other writers the chance to see available orders. Even senior writers like myself would go several months without working on a single order. I stayed without significant work between February 2023 to September 2023. This drought seemed to have worsened in 2024 as I have completed only 4 orders until February 15.

My decision to branch into the data science and AI fields had been coming for some time as I had seen the signs of the declining prospects of the Academic Writing industry from as far back as 2021. So, I had been meaning to branch into other high-demand fields for income-related reasons. In 2023, I tried to venture into data analysis but I was not committed enough to make any meaningful progress, first because my attention was divided between studying and completing some academic papers for a few of my returning clients, and secondly because my mind was not made up as to whether I needed to become a data analyst. I was still hanging on to the hope that the academic industry which had become a stable source of income would come back to life. Unfortunately, that never came to be and a harder decision had to be made.

In the last month of 2023, I talked myself into making a significant paradigm shift. I needed to choose the next thing to do, and I was split between data analysis, data engineering, and AI engineering. Initially, my friend Peter convinced me to join him in data engineering but I did my little research to survey the trends and learned that AI Engineering was the next big thing, and so I became a certified AI Engineer.