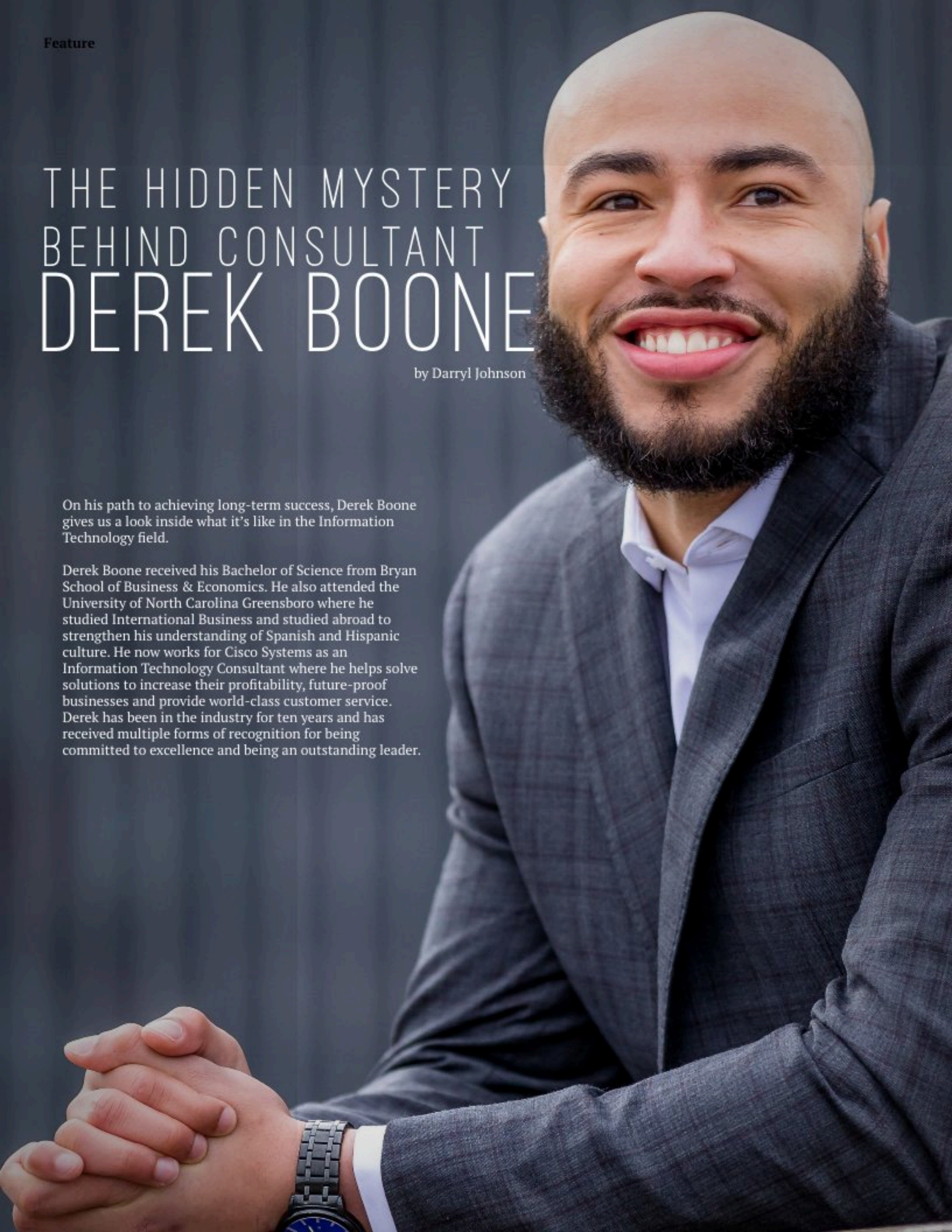


THE HIDDEN MYSTERY BEHIND CONSULTANT DEREK BOONE

by Darryl Johnson

On his path to achieving long-term success, Derek Boone gives us a look inside what it's like in the Information Technology field.

Derek Boone received his Bachelor of Science from Bryan School of Business & Economics. He also attended the University of North Carolina Greensboro where he studied International Business and studied abroad to strengthen his understanding of Spanish and Hispanic culture. He now works for Cisco Systems as an Information Technology Consultant where he helps solve solutions to increase their profitability, future-proof businesses and provide world-class customer service. Derek has been in the industry for ten years and has received multiple forms of recognition for being committed to excellence and being an outstanding leader.



Darryl: First tell me a little about your job and what you do?

Derek: I work with CEO's, executives, and directors on implementing different IT solutions that will help improve their business efficiency and secure their networks. Because telework is more prominent during the pandemic, cybersecurity has become one of the top initiatives of IT directors.

Darryl: How important do you believe the customer-service aspect is to building solid relationships in the corporate world?

Derek: Super important, my team and I put together an initiative where we are to be pretty much "customer obsessed" -- basically doing whatever it takes to satisfy the customer, as well as learning a lot about their business and where they want to take their business. We frequently say "we like to get a Phd in our customer business" so we can really understand how to optimize their efficiency and keep them as secure as possible so that they do not lose any profitably in their network.



Darryl: How has COVID-19 impacted you and your team this year?

Derek: With my company we had a little bit of restructure similar to other companies throughout the world, but it really allowed us to look at things differently. It forced everyone to step outside their comfort zone and I believe it's allowing business owners to really understand how technology will help their businesses move forward. Given all of the circumstances, there will be less face-to-face interactions. Of course, we will still have our essential workers. I have a few healthcare customers who are still going to have figured out how to move as safely as possible into the future as we continue to battle the pandemic worldwide. This time allows us to become more creative around solutions and how we are implementing solutions as well as how we are moving to get back to a certain normalcy that we are used to. Outside of this there is a lot of opportunity with the change in business models and it gives people the chance to really thrive, it's important that we really understand what our value is, to not only our respective companies, but to our communities as well.



Darryl: How has your role within the community helped your career success?

Derek: My ability to adapt to pretty much anyone, not only in my local community, but also I spent time in Peru and Spain while I was studying international business, has helped me. So really being outside of my comfort zone and really being able to adapt to a person's needs while being able to understand everyone on a personal level, everyone is unique in their own sense and you have to be able to make the connection. You are there with great intentions; there are a lot of people who give back because it's expected or because they are asked. There is a true beauty when you really find someone with genuine intentions to help the community and help uplift different people. I wasn't exposed to this industry until I had graduated college whereas if I would've known I would be in this industry or known how lucrative and how many opportunities it could allow me to pursue then I would have benefited from earlier engagement things such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. I definitely could have been ahead of where I am now or further my understanding of the business. So I want to be able to provide those types of opportunities to others and not just in the IT industry, but even in the corporate world in general. Being in corporate America allows you some stability while it also allows you to pursue your other endeavors and it gives you different skills that you can translate into your own personal endeavors.

Darryl: What field did you study during your educational journey?

Derek: My major was international business, the reason because I knew I wanted to understand business and have a high business IQ. The reason I chose international business is because I knew it would take me out of my comfort zone. I have always expressed a great deal of interest in the Spanish and Hispanic culture to where I knew taking an international business route would force me to spend time in a different country which ultimately was a great decision. When I came back to the states I wanted to pursue my Juris Doctorate degree. Once I was back home awaiting on my transcript back from Peru, I started working in the IT industry and started making a little bit of money then I felt I couldn't stop working because I had certain things that had to be taken care of not just for myself but for my family as well.

Community & Career

Darryl: How did you transition your business education into an IT career.?

Derek: It was more so the opportunity that was offered to me in the beginning while I was on the job search. I interviewed at a few companies for customer support/customer service roles. I am extremely glad that my path guided me to where I am today. I believe there is such a thing as divine timing, because one of my college roommates was able to get me a job with a large IT company and from there I was able to take an interest in what type of problems I would solve. Just knowing that I work alongside some of the smartest people in the world helps me because it always feels as if I am being challenged.

Darryl: In what ways do you believe emotional intelligence helps create long-term success?

Derek: Being able to read people in the room, having the ability to understand people's experiences whether it's as a child or in their adult life. If you are able to connect with people, then people will want to be around you and develop that genuine care. Once they see you are taking an interest and really care then that is what translates to opportunities as well as creates a path to success. One of the biggest questions is how well do you handle adversity because it's going to happen, but how well you respond to adversity is the real importance. How you manage yourself, as well as, your emotions is a testament of true leadership. When you combine the skills that the corporate world teaches you with a high understanding for emotional intelligence your success rate is very likely.

Derek is truly gifted and quickly paving the way for other moguls. When asked what advice he would give a person who is looking to pursue a career such as his, he quickly responded "Be a sponge, find someone who is going to mentor or advocate for you. Find a sponsor, there are different levels to mentors and sponsors just align yourself with people who can help you be successful. You want to make sure you are a servant leader -- find different ways to give back and contribute so that you can develop that mutual respect. Having those mutual relationships within business are vital to long-term success."