

Missouri Career Mentor video script



Chaz Jaquess

Project Engineer
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My name is Chaz Jaquess, and I am a project manager for a large, St. Louis-based construction management company. I have a bachelor of science in civil engineering from the University of Missouri – Rolla, and this degree allows me to be an engineer for any construction project, whether it's Busch Stadium or even the Esquire movie theater in St. Louis.

Responsibilities

My primary responsibilities at work? I can think of about three. One, I build client relationships, you know, make sure the client is happy with what we are doing on their construction site. Two, I talk a lot. The communication skills are important, both verbally and on paper. You have to be able to communicate yourself in both areas. And then I also plan, coordinate and I manage construction activity, which consists of what's the best way to erect structural steel... to how do we keep a clean job site. Those are what we call "means and methods" of construction. Also, time is money. So, I make sure each and every day that we work as hard as we can and get as much as we can done. So, construction schedule is also important.

Joys & Challenges

What I enjoy most about my career is there is something new every day. I am the type of person I get bored very easily if I am doing the same old thing. But with my job, I mean, I am working with iron workers that's trying to erect steel on a building; the next day, I am sitting in a meeting with folks from all over the world – from Germany, China – how can we come together to make this construction project the best in the world? Another day, I might just be working behind a computer... on Microsoft Excel, putting together spreadsheets. And then there are other days where I am just on the phone trying to get in contact. So, there's something new every day that I can take on.

Early Influence

There's an interesting story I like to tell about my path and how I became an engineer. I recall in middle school my 8th grade math teacher. She used to place 10 fraction problems, you know, one-half divided by three-fourths. And you had one minute a problem, 10 minutes, a minute a problem to complete and then turn it in. And out of about 25 to 30 students, I was the worst in the class. I mean, I just could not do them. I mean, can you imagine being number 30 out of 30? She pulled me to the side one day and she said I would like to see you after school. And so, I didn't think much of it, I didn't know what she was going to talk about. So, I went there after school, and she said 'there's something in you. I just believe that you can do this math. And I am going to work with you until you get it right.' And after a couple of sessions, I went from worst in the class to best in the class. And I ended up graduating with honors in math and science. And she said, 'do you know anything about engineering?' And I didn't

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know anything about engineering. She said ‘engineers are really good at math and science, and I think you could be a really good engineer some day.’ She said, ‘if you keep your grades up in high school and if you are still interested, let me know.’ And so I did that. I kept my grades up in high school, graduated with honors, valedictorian, and I got ahold of her and I said, ‘I’m interested in becoming an engineer.’ And she said, ‘I’m going to get you into one of the top engineering schools in the nation, and by gosh she did. And the rest is history today.

Types of Engineers

There are many types of engineers in the world. You have engineers that just sit behind the desk and they look at a bunch of drawings – they actually design it. And then you have engineers that interpret the design. These engineers could be mechanical engineers, chemical engineers, electrical engineers, nuclear engineers, petroleum engineers – there are so many different engineers in the world.

Characteristics

There are a few things I can think of in terms of what companies are looking for with engineers. Of course, we know one in particular – math and science, along with reading. But math and science are very important. It’s important to have a good education. Algebra, calculus, trigonometry, you name it... Biology, chemistry. But also, companies are looking for what I call the “It Factor.” The It Factor is something that will give the companies that you are trying to be hired by, you know, something they can always remember. I mean, if they are interviewing 100 people, out of 100 people, what can they remember most about you that will say, “We need to hire this person.”

High School Courses

I want to talk a minute about certain courses you can take in high school. One that comes to mind is algebra. I took algebra, and I am glad I did, because algebra is the foundation for all mathematics. My math teacher inspired me to go beyond algebra. Instead of taking the easy way out, take trigonometry and calculus. And as a result of that, I took those two courses in high school, and I was able to get college credit. And what that means is that I didn’t have to take it when I got to college.

In Retrospect

Knowing what I know now that I wish I would have known then was, two things. One, to take more courses in high school that I can get college credit for and I wouldn’t have to take them when I get to a college or university. Two, to take advantage of community organizations. Companies are looking for well-rounded people. Not just a person who is able to crank out a bunch of formulas or do a bunch of math and not be able to communicate. But companies are looking for people to be social, to be able to communicate your ideas effectively, to be able to work with people, because more often than not, you are going to be working as a team, and you don’t want to be the weakest link in your team. So, people are looking for well-rounded people, and I wish I would have taken advantage more of community organizations, like the Boy Scouts.

Role Model

My grandfather has taught me that manners can get you to places that money can’t. And I have actually tried to prove that wrong, but he’s absolutely right, that the way you treat people can go a long way than how much money you have in your pocket. He also taught me that whatever I decide to be in life, to be the best. If you want to be a doctor, be the best doctor in the world. If you want to be an engineer, be the best engineer in the world. But he’s established a true identity within me to do the very best that I can, for as long as I can. And so I attribute a lot of my success to my grandfather.

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Advice

What advice would I give to a student who wants to prepare for a career like mine? One in particular is that no matter who you are or where you come from, if you got the want-to, you can have the know-how. You can do it. Whatever you put your mind to, you can achieve it.

Words of Wisdom

If I had to give final words of wisdom to any one, any student, it would be the 2 letter, 10-word sentence: If it is to be, it is up to me. And that is the attitude I have had not just in high school, not just in college, but throughout life. That whatever I want to become in life, whatever I want to do, it's up to me, and nobody can stop me from doing it.

Memorable Moment

I want to talk about one of my proudest moments in my life and career. I had the distinguished privilege to meet the founder and owner of the company I work for. I mean, you're talking about 2,000 people all over the world. And I met him. He was kinda up in age, and we were coming from the lunch room. And, you know, he's an older guy. And he was walking. And just to kinda tell you that manners can take you places where money can't – He got off the elevator, and I held the glass door open for him as he was walking down the hall. And he was scooting along, scooting along, and he stopped and he turned around, and he said, 'Young man, what is your name?' And I told him my name. He said, 'I am very proud of you, that you are working for my company. And if there is anything that I can ever do for you, don't hesitate.' And I said, 'No problem.' And I said, 'Why did you say that?' And he said, 'I have been many places, and very few people have held a door open for me. There's just something about anybody that opens the door open for anyone. And I just want you to know that I am very proud to have you on my team. And I mean what I say – if there's anything you need, don't hesitate to see me.'