

## *Henry Kloeppe*

**Age:** 26  
**Title:** CNC Operator  
**Company:** TMCO Inc.  
**Degree:** High School diploma  
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**Hometown:** Hastings, NE

**What does your company do?** TMCO Is a job shop specializing in small runs all the way up to large turn-key assemblies.

**What attracted you to the company?** The high tech toys (or tools to most people). As well as the companies reputation for treating its employees as employees deserve to be treated.

**Please list some of your duties:** Duties include operating a CNC tube laser, CNC tube bender, and the associated programming of said machines. In addition, I design tooling, fixtures, and gauges for tube bending. I do most of the welding on projects for our department, as well as much of the design when necessary. I'm part of the quoting process for bent parts and assemblies, and generally stick my nose in any stage of fabrication I have time for.

**What are the best/most interesting things about your job?** The variety and complexity of work I encounter on a daily basis.

**What is the most rewarding thing about your job?** Designing a part for the tube bender which allows us to do something that would otherwise be impossible or impractical to manufacture.

**How did you decide on this career path?** A combination of appreciating how things work, knowing I didn't want to be an engineer, and dumb luck.

**What kind of school, classes, and training most prepared you with the necessary skills?** Physics, math, and lots of my own time spent learning computers and mechanical skills.

**Do you make a good living?** Obviously my current position does not pay what an entry level engineer would be making, however I have no problems feeding, clothing, and enjoying myself. I decided about 5 years ago that as long as I could make \$30,000 a year gross income, that being happy with my work was more important than the income. After two years in the industry with no previous formal training I'm at the threshold of that income level. I expect that my rise through the ranks will bring me to or above the pay of an average engineer within five years. And I think I will have considerably more fun getting there as well.

**What kind of salary and benefits can a new employee at your company expect?** Salary would depend on the position. As an operator with no previous work experience it would probably be in the range of \$9-13 per hour. However the benefits here are better than any company I have ever worked for or even heard of. The 401k alone trounces every other one I've heard about, matching 100% up to 10% of your income.

**What kind of technology do you use and interact with?** Most of the newer machinery runs on a Windows based platform. The older CNC machines use a more basic platform usually consisting of machine code. And we still have the machines that are manually set up.

**What advice would you give to students who are undecided on a career choice?** Don't rush yourself. What works for 90% of people still means that there is 10% that it doesn't work for. I had to go to Purdue University to find out that I hated the idea of becoming an engineer. Just because you think you want to do something doesn't mean that you are locked into it. Always be open to opportunity and dumb luck.

**Finally, what do you think makes you a good Dream Team candidate?** I'd say that my love of my job is the most important thing I have to contribute. I was once one of those kids that thought I wanted to be an engineer, working in an office, raking in money hand over fist. Kids don't need things "dumbed down" anymore, and they can tell when someone is putting a glossy coat of paint on a run-down car. As someone who could have HAD the high paying job, I can help drive home the idea that wearing a suit to work doesn't make you happy.