

Mike Altschuld

Age: 25

Job Title: Process Engineer

Company Name: Molex, Inc.

College: University of Nebraska, Lincoln

Degree or Certification: Industrial Engineering



What does your company do?

We produce electrical connectors for automotive, consumer, electronic, commercial electronic, and appliance markets. This facility molds the connectors, stamps and plates terminals, and assembles the components. I work in the molding department, where we create plastic connector housings and other components.

What attracted you to the company?

Molex seeks out and makes good use of new technology, and actively practices important industrial engineering concepts. This makes Molex an exciting and interesting place to work and develop skills.

Please list some of your duties:

I am responsible for designing solutions and improvements to existing and new processes. Sometimes this involves analyzing data to understand where problems exist. Other times, the problem has already been identified and I will form a team or work on my own to improve the process. Some of the problems that I have worked on include inventory management, work prioritization, product packaging, material handling and conveying, and setup time reduction. I also work a lot with our Information Systems department to improve and expand our Shop Floor Control System software that all aspects of production use for information required to make the product we sell.

What are the best/most interesting things about your job?

I have a drive to understand how things work. So when I see something in the manufacturing process that doesn't make sense to me or isn't working the way I think it should, I enjoy breaking down the process so that I can understand the components. I think this is one of the most important steps in creating an effective solution to a problem. I also find it very interesting to work with new technology and see how we can implement it in manufacturing.

What is the most rewarding thing about your job?

I find it very rewarding to introduce something new as I work on a project. I get a lot of satisfaction from finding a creative solution that no one has tried before.

How did you decide on this career path?

When I was looking at UNL, I knew that in general I wanted to go into the engineering field. So, I tried to learn about the different programs that were offered and Industrial Engineering caught my interest. After taking a few courses, I became even more interested and thought that it would be a good fit for my skills. Industrial Engineering teaches skills that are applicable to a wide variety of industries. Industries like healthcare and sheet metal stamping may seem very different, but really have many of the same problems when you get to the level of conceptual process flow. So, I knew that with an Industrial Engineering degree I would have diverse possibilities with my career.

What kind of school, classes, and training most prepared you with the necessary skills?

I think the most important skill I learned in school was to look at problems with an open mind and try to find creative solutions. Beyond that, a lot of the knowledge that I learned in the areas of Lean Manufacturing and Six Sigma have served me well in my career.

Do you make a good living?

(A specific \$ amount is not necessary, but we'd like to know how you feel about your standard of living, i.e., the things you can afford, such as a new home or vehicle, savings, investments, entertainment, etc.)

I would like to think that I make a good living for someone my age. I recently bought a new house with my girlfriend, and can still afford a few toys while managing to put some money into savings. There are a lot of opportunities for advancement in manufacturing companies today.

What kind of salary and benefits can a new employee at your company expect?

When I started, my salary was \$42,500. That came with some things that are hard to appreciate as a new graduate – like good insurance and 401(k) matching. It seemed like a big step up from the \$12.50 per hour I was making before, but I don't know where all that extra money went! 😊

What kind of technology do you use and interact with?

I use a variety of software programs every day at work. Data analysis is a big part of my job because it helps identify what areas of the process need improvement and lets me track that improvement after implementation. I use software to create tools that quickly and accurately perform complex operations. This means that important information can be delivered to people when they need it.

There is also a lot of interesting technology used in the injection molding process that I learn more about every day. We put sensors on and in the machines and molds when we are making parts. We use specialized computers and software to interpret the signals from those sensors and we can actually determine very accurately whether a part will be “good” or “reject” before it is even done being formed. This technology not only helps us determine part quality when running product, it is also crucial when trouble shooting the molding process.

What advice would you give to students who are undecided on a career choice?

I would suggest that students, even if they think they know what they want to do, take a few tours of businesses in their area. There are many student and professional societies that work with local businesses to conduct these tours and they usually welcome anyone that is interested in learning more about their industry.

Finally, what do you think makes you a good Career Dream Team candidate?

I think that a good Career Dream Team candidate should motivate students to become interested in manufacturing and related careers. There are a lot of smart and motivated students in high school and college that may not be considering careers in manufacturing right now, but it could be a great opportunity for the students and a benefit to our industry and economy. Hopefully some of those students get the same satisfaction from problem solving and can identify with my experiences. I am thrilled to have the opportunity through Dream It. Do It. and NAMC to encourage them to explore manufacturing.