

# Uniquely Prepared

TV, billiards and Dale Carnegie mold a career in quality

**BEING THE** quality manager of a plastics extrusion and fabrication company for the last eight years has required large shares of technical savvy, people skills and hard work. The experience and skills I've gained in the trenches have been invaluable, and the help from people who have supported me has been priceless. I believe, however, that my unique preparation for filling such a role has been the most valuable of all.

My first exposure to the quality and testing field came as a youngster in my parents' living room while watching "Fight Back," a late-night television show, with my father.

duplicate the test conditions shown in a product's television commercial, attempting to get the same fantastic results.

One by one, from Timex to Krazy Glue, Horowitz either verified or disproved each company's outrageous claims. Even as a young teenager, this program sparked my interest in product design and evaluation.

## Creative courses

The seeds of a future career in engineering began to blossom in a drafting course I took during my sophomore year in high school. My instructor had a knack for coaxing excellence from his students.

This design experience, coupled with college prep math and science courses, helped provide a seamless transition into the technology program at the University of Akron. There, I expanded my understanding of engineering and design principles.

Among the more important quality concepts I learned in college were accuracy, precision and repeatability. I did not, however, learn these concepts in my quality assurance class, but across campus in the student center's game room. I discovered the facilities, which were equipped with 16 tournament-size pool tables, during my very first weekend as a college student. I immediately became fascinated by the science and art of billiards.

Advanced billiards players possess a natural understanding of many physical phenomena, including momentum, reflection and friction. To an engineering student like me, the pool table became a physics lab, where precise actions and their accompanying reactions were executed and studied over and over again.

In my senior year, I won the university's eight ball championship and represented Akron at the regional tournament of college champions. My days of playing pool are long over, but the lessons I learned while chalking up were fundamental to my understanding of the mechanical world.

## Learning from the best

I also learned about relating to other people, not just through day-to-day experience, but also through Dale Carnegie's techniques in his bestselling book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.<sup>1</sup> My father worked as a retail manager in the 1960s and often shared with me the practical insights he gained by attending



We would tune in each week to watch the host, David Horowitz, take on big corporations that were delivering shoddy products and services to their customers.

My favorite segment was the "commercial challenge," when Horowitz would

Learning the fundamentals of mechanical design and drafting came naturally to me. I was fortunate to attend a high school that offered two years of mechanical drawing followed by a third year of architectural design.

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# To an **engineering student like me**, the pool table became a **physics lab**.

company-sponsored Carnegie workshops.

A college friend lent me a copy of Carnegie's classic, which I read in just a few days. Through this book, Carnegie taught me that every person is truly valuable, unique and worthy of appreciation, and that by taking a sincere interest in the lives of those around you, your own life becomes vastly richer. These lessons proved to be essential not just to a career in industry, but also to my life as a whole.

After graduating, I spent six years working for a wire harness manufacturer as a production supervisor and manufacturing engineer. Like many young adults, I learned how little I really knew. I'm thankful for the people I met early in my career who were willing to share their experiences and knowledge with me.

Following a one-year stint at a struggling metal stamping plant, I found my way into my current quality management position.

Even though I had never worked in quality or in plastics, the role fit me perfectly.

I owe my career success largely to my superiors who can see and interpret through a broader lens than I could and to a loyal staff who are committed to excellence in the workplace. I believe in being faithful to the small things, truly respecting other people and learning as a goal for a lifetime.

#### REFERENCE

1. Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Simon and Schuster, 1936.



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## Business Continuity Management



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ORGANIZATION  
PREPARED?

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