



Profiles of Chemical Engineers



Susan Butler

**Ink Development Engineer
Lexmark International
Lexington, KY**

Education:

B.S. - Chemical Engineering, University of Kentucky

Job Description:

Product Engineer in ink jet development.

Advice to Students:

"Communication is very important. Your success is dependent upon how well you can communicate your ideas with others. So it's very important to take as many communication classes as possible-and get up in front of people and speak."

Video Transcript:

"Once I leave work, I try to leave the stress and all the problems at work, and sometimes that's difficult, but it is very important if you want to keep sanity outside of the workplace."

Interview:

Butler: My name is Susan Butler. I'm a product engineer in ink jet development, and I work for Lexmark International.

Q: How did you decided to become a chemical engineer?

Butler: I visited several colleges and I was looking into something in environmental, so I looked at civil engineering and chemical engineering. When I visited the chemical engineering department at University of Kentucky, they showed me a lot of the projects they were working on, and it was really interesting to me. That's what initially got me into chemical engineering.

Q: What was your college experience like?

Butler: I did a lot outside of chemical engineering -although it does take a lot of your time, and it is very stressful, and very time consuming-because I was interested in other areas, like volunteering.

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Q: Did you co-op while you were an undergrad?

Butler: The co-oping I did was with a chemical company. I also worked for Toyota Automotive Company where they make Camrys. I worked on an exchange process for water systems, and that's what I took care of for alternating semesters for a year.

Q: What on-campus activities were you involved with?

Butler: I volunteered at a nursing home. I did a lot of different activities, like helping people that needed their homes fixed-up, through Habitat for Humanity. I was involved in a lot of different areas where there was a need, that also gave me a break from school.

Q: How did you find your first job after school?

Butler: My husband's still in school at the University of Kentucky, so I had to work in Lexington. This left a very narrow range of job areas to look into. So I looked into environmental consulting firms as well as manufacturing, and that's how I got the job at Lexmark.

Q: Was finding a job a difficult process?

Butler: It was a difficult process, and I was pretty much on my own. I probably had 12 resumes at Lexmark. I was pushing very hard because they are the biggest industry in this area.

Q: What helped you get your job at Lexmark?

Butler: My co-oping experience. I think my co-oping experience was very demanding. It was a 24 hour-a-day job, I was on pager, and I think people were impressed with my dedication. I could go to work at 8:00 p.m. or 6:00 a.m. I think just the work ethic that belonged with that job, as well as the chemistry experience, was what helped me get my job here.

Q: After you finished college, did you feel you were prepared?

Butler: I feel I was ready. I think my co-op experience helped me the most. The academic world and the work place are very different, and if you don't have any experience at all in the work place it's very difficult to be thrown into that environment. But if you do have background in that area, it is a lot easier.

Q: What would you say has been your proudest work-related accomplishment?

Butler: I would have to say the ink development itself. I work in ink jet ink development, and actually having a product that goes to the marketplace for the first time is really exciting. When you're in school, you never have any big accomplishments like that, so it is something that's very exciting to someone who's just out of school.

Q: How would you define success at work?

Butler: Being happy in your job.

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Q: Are there many opportunities available for chemical engineers?

Butler: There is a vast area of jobs for chemical engineers, and you can pick and choose what area you want to go into. There are all different kinds of manufacturers that use chemical engineers. There are also environmental firms, and consulting firms that use chemical engineers. So it's really exciting, you don't have to be limited to one single area.

Q: Do you use a computer a lot at work?

Butler: A lot of the software that I used in college I have been using in the work place. So there hasn't been a lot of difference between then and now. I just use it a lot more now.

Q: What software do you think is most commonly used here by chemical engineers?

Butler: Spreadsheets, usually to make formulations or just to keep up with data.

Q: What advice would you offer to someone interested in becoming a chemical engineer?

Butler: Communication is very important. Your success is dependent upon how well you can communicate your ideas with others. So it's very important to take as many communication classes as possible-and get up in front of people and speak-to get used to that atmosphere.

Q: What skills have you acquired from the work place that would transfer to another job?

Butler: I'm working in both development and manufacturing. In manufacturing you need problem solving skills-you have to figure out what the problem is and then decide how you're going to solve it. That's something that any work place manufacturing atmosphere can use. Development is a totally different area where you spend a lot of time trying different materials and chemicals to find what will optimize whatever income you're working on.

Q: Is co-op or internship experience important to have?

Butler: When you're looking for a job, having experience such as a co-op is very helpful. It's something any employer would want, because it shows that you have worked in the work place, and know what's expected of you.

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