



# Sloan Career Cornerstone Center

## Profiles of Chemical Engineers



**Robin Gnerlich**

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

### **Education:**

B.S. - Chemical Engineering, Purdue University

### **Job Description:**

Ink Development Engineer

### **Advice to Students:**

"Take part in a summer internship or a co-op. What you do in school often isn't very similar to what you will be doing later."

### **Interview:**

Gnerlich: My name is Robin Gnerlich, and I am a development engineer at Lexmark International.

### **Q: How did you become interested in chemical engineering?**

Gnerlich: Well, my father is a mechanical engineer. So I probably got a little bit of an idea for what to major in. When I was in high school, I really liked chemistry and math, and I had an idea what he did in his job, but I wasn't so sure that I wanted to do exactly that. So I decided that chemical engineering would be a good combination.

### **Q: Did you find college challenging?**

Gnerlich: It's always challenging, but I think it's because there is a lot of work. Some classes are more difficult than others, but most of the time it's just having to do a lot of homework and having a lot of tests and quizzes. You'll find that it will change as you get older. Your freshman year is a lot of busy work, and then you start to enjoy it more when you get to your senior year, because you see why you're studying this.

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**Q: Did you have any co-op experiences in college?**

Gnerlich: Yeah, I had a summer internship at a chemical plant and they made synthetic rubber. It was a different environment than I'm in now. It was mostly manufacturing and not a lot of development work. It was also a smaller company. There were about 300 people or so, as opposed to here where there's probably about 5,000. So I knew everyone that I worked with and the environment was just a lot different than it is here.

**Q: How did you find this job?**

Gnerlich: Well, I went to Purdue and they have a really good placement center. What they do is post companies that are coming to interview on campus, and you sign up for your interviews. Lexmark had come up to recruit on campus, so I signed up for an interview with them but I didn't get my interview because they pick by lottery. Later on in the year, I'd had a few other interviews with companies, I saw that they had placed an ad in the paper at home. So I applied again, they gave me a call back, and I came here on-site for an interview.

**Q: What do you think you bring to Lexmark?**

Gnerlich: Probably organizational skills, and I think I have pretty good people skills. I hadn't had much experience in this type of company, so, I would say that it was other factors-maybe a combination of my academics, activities, and personal skills.

**Q: How would you describe your work environment?**

Gnerlich: There are about 12 of us that work together, and at times there are a lot of projects going on at once, so it's a small group of people, trying to handle a lot of things. We interact a lot and we have a lot of meetings, I think that's the best description of how we get our work done here.

**Q: Of the 12 people you work with, are they all chemical engineers?**

Gnerlich: Well, it's a combination of chemical engineers and chemists.

**Q: Do you only work with one team?**

Gnerlich: Our department works on ink development, and different groups of people within that department will have different projects that they'll work on together. But as a department, all of us are aware of what everyone is doing at the same time.

**Q: What do you do during a typical day?**

Gnerlich: It really depends on what's going on at that particular time. There will be some weeks when I spend most of my days in meetings, and there will be other times when I will be testing products that we're developing.

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**Q: Do you feel your undergraduate education prepared you for the real world?**

Gnerlich: Yes. Mostly with chemistry and math, because this environment is different from a chemical engineering job in a chemical plant. But overall, school prepares you to be able to learn later. All the things that you take part in in school are going to help you later on.

**Q: Do you see yourself staying in the chemical engineering field?**

Gnerlich: Yes, I think so, because one thing about chemical engineering is it's a very diverse field. If you change your mind and decide that you don't like what you're doing, you can move into anything. I think that when employers look at candidates and see that they have a technical degree and a certain set of skills, the employer will be more willing to develop and train that employee for whatever job they want to move into.

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

Gnerlich: Take part in a summer internship or a co-op. What you do in school often isn't very similar to what you will be doing later. A lot of what you will be doing in school is setting yourself up through grades and activities, but you're not going to know what goes on in a company-or how to function day-to-day-until you witness that and take part in it.

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