



Profiles of Electrical Engineers and Computer Scientists



Robert Krause

**Self Employed
Public Utility Consultant
Fort Worth, TX**

Education:

B.S. - Electrical Engineering, Brigham Young University
M.S. - Business Administration, Arizona State University

Job Description:

Public Utility Consultant, acting as the expert witness either supporting the power company or testifying against them when the company applies for a rate increase to the Public Utility Commission.

Advice to Students:

"Consulting is rewarding for those who find their niche, but it is neither as glamorous as some like to think nor the right type of work for everybody."

Video Transcript:

"As a consultant, I quite often have people tell me, oh what a wonderful life that must be. You have all this freedom. You have all this time and you're your own boss. I've found though that as a consultant I'm not my own boss, I've always got a client who is my boss. In fact, quite often, I've got four or five bosses at one time. And my job as a consultant is to try and satisfy them all."

Interview:

Robert Krause is a public utility consultant. After working for a number of years for electrical power companies and getting an MBA, he became a consultant on electrical rates. Krause points out that consulting is rewarding for those who find their niche, but it is neither as glamorous as some like to think nor the right type of work for everybody.

Consultants are experts in a field who are hired temporarily to solve problems. They work from a home office, where they have the equipment necessary to do their work a computer, fax machine, Internet access, answering machine, copier. That means consultants do all of their own work. "They fill out their own invoices; they do their own accounting. They even take out the garbage."

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Although they spend some time meeting with clients, most is spent alone "doing all the grunt work." Krause explains, "There's a lot of analysis involved. A lot of preparation. A lot of research that has to be done, quite often, in front of a computer, over the Internet or on location some place. Quite often libraries of a public utility commission." Once the research is finished, "you are the one that does all the spreadsheets, all the calculations. You prepare your report. You do the typing."

An important part of the job is networking. Networking is a way of getting information needed for a particular assignment. It is a way of making contacts and "staying abreast of what's happening and who's going to need you next." Krause believes that "attendance at IEEE conferences or any conference is always an opportunity for networking. Always. What you want to do, again, is to make contact with people in other areas. Contacts really become friends." When those friends need a consultant "they will think of you."

But Krause cautions that an engineer must have the right temperament to become a consultant. "If you've been an engineer in management, who's had a staff under you, and you've been able to throw out assignments, and they take care of all the grunt work -- or if you don't like the detail -- you probably will not do well as a consultant." Consulting can also mean financial instability. "Consulting is basically a feast-or-famine operation. When you've got a contract going, you can make very good money. When your contract comes to an end, you're laid off. If you're not continually marketing yourself, you reach a point when a contract ends and there's nothing lined up to start. During those down times, you have to watch your budget very, very carefully."

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