



Sloan Career Cornerstone Center

Profiles of Mechanical Engineers



Dominick Vermet

**Vice-President, Midwest Sales
Detroit Diesel Corporation
Detroit, MI**

Education:

BS, Mechanical Engineering, University of Michigan

Job Description:

Vice President who prospects and cultivates clients, and interacts with company personnel in finance, marketing, manufacturing, and customer service.

Advice to Students:

"Be very broad-visioned about what you can do with your engineering degree -- it opens a lot of doors for you. If you want to be an open, proactive person, you can go anywhere with a degree."

Comments:

"I always knew that I wanted to be a mechanical engineer. Frankly, I really didn't know what that meant as a young boy, and I guess even in school I really didn't know what that meant. I enjoy the relationship of moving parts, and the fact that they went bang, that you had combustion in an engine, whether it was gasoline or diesel, was always of interest. I thought I would go into engine design and then came to realize that my talents and my interest moved me away from the actual theoretical engineering into more of the "people side," the customer application, product application side of engineering."

Video Transcript 1:

"Your engineering degree really just opens the door to get you started someplace. Use it for that purpose and look over very closely what it is you really want to do because the opportunities are I think limitless, and you need to find out what your talents are. I told people I wanted to do different things. Just don't make an assumption that someone else is going to look out for your best interests. I mean you may well be in a big company, and their interests are in finding out how to utilize you, but they may not be specifically knowledgeable on what you need or what directions you're willing to go. I wouldn't assume that somebody is going to move you from position to position. I would make sure you identify the people, what it is that you would like to do and how you think you can accomplish that with their help."

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Video Transcript 2:

"The best parts are I get to travel; I get to meet new people. I get to coordinate activities, which I enjoy doing, and I get to see that the end results are hopefully what I had intended or certainly what we determined we wanted after we got stated."

Video Transcript 3:

"In the business world, what engineering has taught me that was very helpful is the completion of assignments on time. It's very critical when you're in any kind of business to get something done effectively, but also just to get it done. And I found in the engineering school and the University of Michigan, we had to hand in assignments, and they were graded and critiqued. But they had to be in on time, and they didn't tolerate being late. At least my professors didn't, and I found that very helpful here, in that I've been trained to produce, and you can always critique what it is, but there was something to critique when the deadline was there."

Interview:

Vermet: I'm Dominick Vermet. However I go by Nick. Just recently, day before yesterday, I turned 40 years old. I work for Detroit Diesel Corporation as a vice president of sales, in charge of the central region in the United States. I've been with Detroit Diesel Corporation, which is an engine manufacturer out of Detroit, since January of 1980.

I'm an engineer, but make no mistake, this is a business. In my work I deal with the customer and internal sides of the business. I am in constant communication with the engineering department to assist in fine-tuning the release of a product. That means I deal with individual component engineers and their managers in getting the right products on the market. I work with the finance department, because I am effectively the account manager for each customer. I meet with the chief financial officer on the inside and with our OEM clients. I work with our technicians, wrench turners, mechanics on the shop floor, maintenance managers, owners of companies, even chairmen of multinational companies. This is all part of the business.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about what Detroit Diesel is, who their customers are, and a little bit about your product?

Vermet: Detroit Diesel is an engine house, and what we do is we sell horsepower. We either manufacture engines in this facility here in Detroit, or a few other facilities worldwide. Those engines are then shipped to equipment manufacturers -- OEMs -- Original Equipment Manufacturers, and they're used in new machines. Anything from asphalt pavers to lawnmowers to motor yachts, city buses, highway coaches, and our largest market is the over-road highway truck. So, what we do is we sell the engines to the new equipment manufacturers as well as sell them to our distributor organization to smaller manufacturers -- like pump engines for a well and irrigation work. Street sweepers. We're in the horsepower business. When companies that manufacture equipment look for a specific horsepower or torque power plant, we hope that they think of Detroit Diesel.

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Q: What about in terms of your customers? Are they national, or is it an international operation and how so?

Vermet: We're very much an international operation. I don't know the exact figure, but I'm going to say we're about 26 or 27% international, and we're working towards 30%. We have our largest production facility and also the production facility for our largest engines in Detroit, Michigan, but we've recently joined in a partnership with a company in Gent, Italy, which manufactures a line of Detroit Diesel. So we're very much a global organization and growing. We have customers worldwide. An example would be a customer would purchase, say, a yacht in North America or in Italy and take that to Australia or to Cavo or into Puerto Rico or fishing off the Aleutian Islands. So our products really go everywhere in the world.

Q: Do you yourself travel a lot in your position?

Vermet: Since I'm in the central region, I get to travel extensively throughout that. And that goes from northwest Montana, across the Plains states, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, into northeast Ohio. Then it kind of tapers down and funnels down to the Gulf of Mexico. So, I get to travel extensively within that area in my current position. I've also had positions that involved worldwide travel. So I have a few frequent-flier miles.

Q: OK. Nick, did you want to tell me, did you receive your Bachelor's at University of Michigan?

Vermet: Correct. I received a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Michigan in December of 1979. I had worked two summers prior to that at Detroit Diesel as a cooperative student. Actually, in the sales department back then. I came from school in December of '79. In January of '80, I started full time at our training facility, which at the time was in Indianapolis, Indiana. So I've been here full since January of '80.

Q: Did you always know that you wanted to study mechanical engineering?

Vermet: Yes, I always knew that I wanted to be a mechanical engineer. Frankly, I really didn't know what that meant as a young boy, and I guess even in school I really didn't know what that meant. I'd always been very good with my hands. I enjoy the relationship of moving parts, and that's why mechanical versus electrical or civil. So I like the moving relationship of mechanical parts, and the fact that they went "bang," that you had combustion in an engine, whether it was gasoline or diesel, was always of interest. So, I thought I would go into engine design and then came to realize that my talents and/or my abilities or my interest moved me away from the actual theoretical engineering, which I thought I'd go into, into more the people side, people-application, product-application side of engineering.

Q: Did you enjoy college?

Vermet: I enjoyed college immensely. It's why it took me 5-1/2 years.

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Q: You said you co-oped for two summers?

Vermet: Yes. I co-oped for two summers at Detroit Diesel, but it wasn't an official co-op program. I started out with summer jobs at Chevrolet Engineering Center, at the Tech Center. I then went on to Ford Engineering in Dearborn, and I had applied at Detroit Diesel for a job in the engineering co-op program, and I wasn't accepted. They told me that all the positions were filled. But I didn't give up, and I got a call somewhat later from the sales department of Detroit Diesel, saying, "Hey, we have a co-operative job in the sales side of the business. Would you be interested in that?" And that was of interest. So that's kind of where I first made the transition from the real theoretical engineering to the sales side, and then I've been back and forth from sales to product service to sales consistently for the last 16 years.

Q: Do you feel, and we'll move off your education, but do you feel that your undergraduate education prepared you for the working world?

Vermet: My undergraduate education, I can't really say "prepared" me for the working world. What it did give me, part of the best thing it's given me, is the ability to logically think through something and try to get the desired anticipated results. Engineering, the problems you do, and the homework and the tests, really teach you about a logical thought process, applying theorems or known facts to get you to a conclusion. And that's really helped me in having a rational approach to try and get to a desired result. So it prepared me in that regard. Now differential equations, I haven't a clue. I wasn't real good at them a long time ago, and I certainly haven't used them in many years. So, the actual course content isn't specifically helpful to me. But the thought process, the structure of doing the assignments and handing them in on time is probably critical because in the business world, what engineering has taught me that was very helpful is the completion of assignments on time. It's very critical when you're in any kind of business to get something done effectively, but also just to get it done. And I found in the engineering school and the University of Michigan, we had to hand in assignments, and they were graded and critiqued. But they had to be in on time, and they didn't tolerate being late. At least my professors didn't, and I found that very helpful here, in that I've been trained to produce, and you can always critique what it is, but there was something to critique when the deadline was there.

Q: What would you tell college freshmen and sophomores? What could you tell them that you wish you knew when you were in school studying, that you know now, from your experience?

Vermet: Some of the things that I know now that I wish I had been more aware of I guess when I was 18, 19, 20 years old is that your engineering degree really just opens the door to get you started someplace. Use it for that purpose and look over very closely what it is you really want to do because the opportunities are I think limitless, and you need to find out what your talents are. I found out my talents are more on the organization of people versus the manipulation of numbers, or nowadays computer programs, to prove things. So, I guess be very broad-visioned about what you can do with your engineering degree, and it opens a lot of doors for you. But you're still in control. If you want to be an open, proactive person, you can go anywhere with a degree and talk and listen to people, and I'm going to say "perform."

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Q: Nick, you're saying there's a lot of different ways to go with mechanical engineering? What is your view of engineering as a career? Is that pretty much how you'd sum it up?

Vermet: I'd say engineering as a career gives you an excellent starting salary, and I'd be remiss if that wasn't one of the interesting things to me. When I look back in the '70s as to what I was capable of, and frankly, looked at supporting myself and getting away from my folks, I realized that an engineering degree gave you a very high starting-out salary. I didn't know where it would go. So, I used it to open the door to some companies. I had many people interested in working with me at the time, and got me started, and then I was able to figure out where I wanted to go with my engineering knowledge or really the ability to think and process, and my own quirkiness or whatever. So I ended up in sales.

Q: Can you walk me through a typical day, how much of your time is spent talking to people on the phone, say in meetings, on the computer, on the road? Just kind of give me an idea.

Vermet: In regards to a typical day, in my current role as a regional person I'm not really expected to be in the office shuffling paper and phone calls or working computers. I am supposed to be out on the road working with customers and our end-users. So I try to be out as often as possible, meaning in a five or a six-day workweek, I'm normally gone three to four days. A day in the office normally starts out with the drive-in to work, picking up the cellular phone and calling in to see if there were any messages from last evening that I should be aware of before I get going. Certainly, I have a cup of coffee in the morning and continually throughout the day. So I then get into the office, fire up my laptop computer, check E-mail messages, respond to them, forward them along the lines, and then I'll move into the different folders of mail I have, which depends how long I've been gone, how thick they are. And then certainly a great deal of time is on the phone, responding, following up to previous items, or answering calls that come in. So, it's pretty flexible, once you get past the routines of checking to see who needs assistance and the different media forms, whether it's an E-mail message or a phone call or whatever.

Q: How many hours a week, roughly, do you think you work?

Vermet: It's countless. We're not paid on an hourly basis. You're paid to get jobs accomplished. I enjoy what I do. I spend probably more hours than are needed. If you ask for a specific answer, I'd say generally 10 hours a day, five days a week, and then there's certainly some homework that goes on with that. But it doesn't seem that long or maybe that's not long enough. You really have to be flexible as to what the needs are, and what engineering gave me is to "prioritize." I prioritize what needs to be done immediately, near-term, and frankly later and then never. That's the round file. You throw that stuff out. And if I have on any given day or week a lot of important issues that I feel need to be completed, then you just continue until you have those done and then you manage the ones that'll tolerate some time or age and do those at your next day.

Q: How many people report to you.

Vermet: About 20 people.

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Q: Once you get out into the work world, I think most engineers, a lot of engineers work in a team effort. Can you just talk about that and your feelings about that?

Vermet: Yes. Teamwork is something that this company Detroit Diesel is very keen on, with Roger Pensky and the race team. We definitely believe that a team approach is what you need to do to solve issues effectively. The team that I work with in the central region is some 20 people. We have a staff, a support staff here in Detroit, of which the only one that doesn't travel is the secretary. But we've got service and sales-support here, and then the other people are located out in the regional areas. I've got people working and living in the Billings, Montana area. St. Louis, Missouri; Ohio; Memphis, Tennessee, etc. So we definitely work together. We communicate together. We'll visit customers together and try to bring different things together to get the anticipated results.

Q: OK. What about here? Is there any telecommuting available? Is there anyone that stays at home and works, and they do any programs like that?

Vermet: Absolutely. There are people that stay at home and work for Detroit Diesel. One area where they literally stay at home and work, quite often, would be someone in a warranty department, where they'll process claims at home. My sales and service force out in the territories, they work out of their home office. However, we'd really like them to be out amongst customers or dealers, versus actually in their office, although we're aware they have to be there to manage the paper and the phone load. So they definitely work out of a home.

Q: I wanted to walk through each of your jobs here at Detroit Diesel, to see your career path.

Vermet: My career at Detroit Diesel started in January of 1980 in Indianapolis, Indiana. I was living in Detroit during the co-op process, so I was able to move away from home and start out on my own, and the job was an instructor/trainer at our training center. Initially, I started out as what we call a CGIT, College Graduate In Training, where I followed some of the other engine instructors around like a shadow and got to see how to do the job of telling technicians and mechanics from across the world, how to rebuild and diagnose and repair different Detroit Diesels. I was in that position pretty close to three years, progressing to more complex engines. At that time we also had an automatic-transmission side of the business and different classes, both on the specific engine and the transmission, as well as the application on the products. So each time they got you more involved in a more complex product or a more complex process. So as you're teaching the students, you certainly pick up a lot from these technicians, again from across the world. That was a three-year position, at which time I'm not a real patient person, and that has its own unique challenges, whether it's the business world or at home with your wife and kid. But I was ready to do something else after about a year and a half. I said, "OK, I've got a flavor for this. What else do you have, Detroit Diesel, that I can do for you? Where else can you utilize me?"

I'd recently gotten married and my wife was ready, willing and able to travel. So I was kind of champing at the bit to do something else, and I had supervisors that realized that I must have some capabilities. So people talk, and a job opened up in Atlanta, Georgia for a regional-service representative. So I moved from Indianapolis with my wife to Atlanta, which would be

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about 1983 now. And I became a service representative in the territories of Alabama and Mississippi. So they sent a Yankee who was very green into that area to deal with our distributor, dealers of different equipment and end-user customers. So I learned about the pulpwood industry and all kinds of things in that part of the country. That job lasted about a year or so, and my supervision felt that I must have mastered that reasonably well, and again, I was asking for something else. So they moved me to a different part of the Southeast region, and I went and had responsibilities for Georgia and South Carolina -- again service. I got the title then of a service manager, a territory-service manager. I did that a year or so, and I said "OK, what else you've got?" And they said, "All right, we're going to make you service in Florida." I said, "OK, that's pretty good." So I got to work on yacht engines and go out on sea trials and make sure that our engines did well in the state of Florida where a lot of our marine business is. Then there was some restructuring at the company, and again, I was asking for additional responsibilities, and they said, "All right, you're going to be a sales and service manager for the state of Florida." So, I was wearing both hats, and I was out there to try to promote the use of our product, support equipment manufacturers as well as end-users to stimulate sales, and make sure that the engines did proper. That took me up, we're now in the Fall of 1987. In the Fall of '87 I moved to Jacksonville, Florida because they wanted me within my area, and at that time the company changed hands and Detroit Diesel Allison, Division of General Motors, became Detroit Diesel Corporation, owned by Pensky Corporation. At that time, Roger Pensky had a reputation of looking for young aggressive people to help manage this company, and I raised my hand, and I said, "OK, there's a restructuring. What else do you have to offer? I'm ready to go somewhere and do anything." They said "OK. We have an opportunity in California, to be a regional product-support manager."

So I moved to the California region, which is in Los Angeles. I moved to the western region -- pardon me -- which is in Los Angeles, and I had service responsibilities for our western region, which is Alaska to Hawaii and about a third of the western United States. At that time, I had some six people working for me. So, it was a significant promotion and now my third move with Detroit Diesel. So, the wife and I went to California. Coincidentally, we had our first child who's blonde. So, it must happen when they're born in California. I was out there for three years. Again, after a year and a half or two, I started asking my management, I said, "OK, I'm doing service stuff. What other jobs do you have?" I was again looking to expand my career at Detroit Diesel, looking to give them an excuse to give me more money by demonstrating I was capable of doing more things. It wasn't too much later, after three years in California, that an opportunity came up back here in Detroit to be the Vice President of Bus and Coach Engine Sales. So in 1991, my wife and I and our son, Corbin, moved to Detroit, to assume a worldwide responsible position for the sale of all our bus and motor coach model engines. I again still had about six people working for me at that time. I got to travel throughout the world, although the lion's share of the business is here in the NAFTA territories of Canada, Mexico and the U.S. Again, predominantly a sales-oriented function. But like the captain of a ship, total responsibility for selling our engines and ensuring that people that have them buy them again. That job also lasted about three years.

Again, I was interested in doing other things for Detroit Diesel, although Detroit's home, so I was a little less enthusiastic about how I volunteered saying that "I'd go anywhere," because my family is here in Detroit. So my boys have got grandparents, and I was like, "OK, I like this job. But do you have anything else that's Detroit where I could do something different. I'd still travel anywhere, but I'd like to leave my family in the Detroit area." Well, sure enough, here

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last September and September of '95, a different job came open and that's the vice president of the central region, and that pretty much brings us up here to end July of 1996.

Q: What do you think are the best aspects of your job and what are the worst?

Vermet: If I were asked what the best or worst aspects of my job are, the best aspects are the different things that someone pays you to experience. I enjoy immensely meeting people. I enjoy working with people, and I enjoy bringing desired results. So, whether you're doing an interview for the ASME or whether you're getting a new engine installed in an OEM's vehicle line, or whether you're coordinating a project through the home office here. In visiting an equipment manufacturer, I know what they need, but I need actual engineering support to get the engine to fit correctly and perform correctly so you'll work then within a different team. The best part is I get to travel. I get to meet new people. I get to coordinate activities, which I enjoy doing, and I get to see that the end results are hopefully what I had intended or certainly what we determined we wanted after we got stated. The worst part about it is that it isn't ever ending. There's never a day, and there has never been a day, that at the end of the day I was done. And that's something that I'd never really thought of as an engineering student. When you're a student, you accomplish the task and you're done with that task and maybe there's a different assignment or a different chapter or a different course, but there's closure. And this position, as I say, you could work 24 hours a day, nonstop, and the world always needs more engines or they need assistance with the ones they have already. So, the worst aspect is you have to learn that there are going to be some open issues, and you've got to roll with those the best you can because they'll make you turn gray or lose your hair or no telling what else.

Q: You talked a little about the difference in being in school and starting working. What surprised you the most about that?

Vermet: The most surprising thing -- the longer I thought about what would be surprising, I'd probably come up with different answers -- but in speaking to engineering students that are going out into the career world, I wouldn't assume that somebody is going to move you from position to position. I would make sure you identify the people, what it is that you would like to do and how you think you can accomplish that with their help. Because I saw other people within the company that asked me as I moved from position to position, "Well, how'd you know that job was open?" Or "How did you know this or that was going on?" And I said, "Well, I told people I wanted to do different things." Just don't make an assumption that someone else is going to look out for your best interests. I mean you may well be in a big company, and their interests are in finding out how to utilize you, but they may not be specifically knowledgeable on what you need or what directions you're willing to go.

Q: Do you have a PE license?

Vermet: I do not have a PE license. Once I got my engineering degree, I didn't see that there was any need to go on for further engineering academic work. So no, I do not have a PE license.

Q: Did you take the FE exam?

Vermet: I don't know what an FE exam is.

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Q: Fundamentals of Engineering.

Vermet: I don't think we needed to do such a thing back in the '70s.

Q: You also talked about one of the reasons, one of the things you liked about after leaving school. That starting salaries were very high. Do you feel that follows through in an engineering career?

Vermet: If asked about starting salaries, they were high when I got out of school. I'm afraid to find out what they are now. They probably continue to be high. It's tough to get substantially more. I think they start out high. There's a broad spectrum of good pay, but not exorbitant pay. I don't think there's ever exorbitant pay that I've found. So in order to -- at least as I understand it -- to get more money, you probably need to be promoted to different levels, and there's a lot of competition within the engineering community. You may well have to have additional degrees beyond the Bachelor's Degree. Managers and directors here, probably to a man or to an individual, I should say, have a Master's degree in engineering, and certainly those in the real theoretical engineering side have PhDs in engineering. And I wasn't prepared to go back and do that, and I probably wouldn't have been successful at it, either.

Q: Nick, do you want to tell us about some of your hobbies? I know from your bio you're into antique cars. What are your hobbies, interests, outside of work?

Vermet: Interests outside of work? Well, first and foremost, here, recently, wife and child. So as I've gotten older and have a son, I'm doing more and more things with him. But if you ask me what my real specific hobbies are, I started out restoring cars when I had to because all I could afford was a piece of junk as a high school kid. So I started doing body work and paint work on automobiles and I've always had a desire to own different things. So, I'd get one and work on it awhile and fix it up and sell it and move on to the next one, and I still continue to do that. I like older things. My belief is anyone can go out and buy something new. But not anyone can take something older and kind of refurbish it. So, I refurbish automobiles. Also recently, I've been into British motorcycles. I also have a "not too old" boat. But it's certainly not brand-new either. So I enjoy working. Again, it all revolves around engines. I enjoy working on engines and I guess making them look and perform like they did when they were new.

Q: Nick, do you belong to any technical or professional societies? Are you active?

Vermet: As far as being active in technical or professional societies, I am not a specific member of the ASME. However, I have co-authored two essay papers. So, that's probably as active as I've been in the engineering society, and in turn, sales. I'm not a member of any type sales organizations. So I have co-authored papers. This was when I was in the bus and coach department. I did so with one of our customers who brought, I think, an interesting perspective -- an end-user and a salesman from an engine house. We gave an update on some technical products.

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Q: What about in terms of continuing your education now? Do you take any classes? Do you do anything through your company?

Vermet: As far as a continuing education, I'm not doing anything, per se, structured. There've been some things available. My extensive travel schedule hasn't really fostered that and, frankly, I haven't had too much interest. I'm working a lot with computers and picking up different things on how to communicate and utilize electronics to communicate more effectively. And then in turn I'll read different books relating to human skills and managing of people and managing of time, certainly.

Q: Do you find it difficult to balance your worklife and your personal life and your family life? Is that a challenge?

Vermet: Balancing worklife and family life, I don't know that it would be a challenge. But every now and then, the two do bump into one another. There are times. I have business cards that I put my home phone number on, and I'm also available to our message service as well as our other employees, if there's a specific need. So the other evening, I was trying to sit down to a dinner that my wife prepared, and the kid was ready to eat. I was probably already a little late in coming home and all of a sudden, I had to interrupt that just as we were getting started -- to manage some phone calls. So I don't know that it was challenging to manage that. But as I say, business and homelife sometimes bump heads and sometimes business gets the upper hand, and then sometimes you've got to say, "Hey, the homelife needs the upper hand right now."

Q: How would you describe your current lifestyle? What do you do on the weekends? Do you do family-oriented things? Do you socialize with people at work?

Vermet: As far as an afterwork life or so, I live in a part of Detroit where most people from Detroit Diesel don't live. So I'm kind of off, away from the lion's share of my peers at Detroit Diesel. Again, since I'm in a regional position, most of the guys that I work with, my team members, again, they're in Montana or Missouri or Arkansas. So it's kind of hard to socialize with them on the weekend. And after meeting all the different people and going to different places that I do during the week, I'm not at all against sitting at home and watching my grass grow. So I'll probably get on the motorcycle with the boy and head to the boat. Or the wife, boy, and I will go to a car show and we participate in those. I coach a rollerblade hockey team. So it's more the three of us, kind of family activities; around boat, car, home, and really recently, what the boy has been into.

Q: You're speaking directly now to college students, freshmen and sophomores. What advice would you give them?

Vermet: If asked to give advice to college students, there are probably two chapters on that. One is if you're in school and one is if you're out of school. Certainly, if you're in school, stay in school. Get a diploma, because it really is a powerful tool that'll be with you the rest of your life. When you're out of school, whatever career path you take or whatever company you're with, I would let your supervisor and theirs and maybe even theirs, know what you're interested in doing. Not, "Hey, this is what I want to do," but "Here's what I like to do. How do you see the company utilizing me so I become a better return on

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investment for the company?" I've interviewed -- I'm part of the interviewing team here at Detroit Diesel for many college students, and a lot of people come tell us why they want to work here and forget "What's in it for the company?" I mean why would we want to hire you as an individual? What skills, talents, drives -- what do you bring, other than you think this would be a neat place to work? So I would always communicate with direct and upper management - - however bold you are -- to let people know what you're interested in and ask them how they can help you get there, if they see it's in the company's best interest versus just making the assumption and coming to work every day.

Q: What about something to high school students? At that level?

Vermet: Well, I don't know. If I were in high school again, I'd probably goof off more. So that'd be a tough question to ask, "What it is you should do different in high school?" Because work can be relentless and I don't know that I'd be in that terribly much of a hurry, other than have the discipline to do what's asked of you in a timely manner. I can't offer a whole lot more than that.

Q: I have just one other question, off the subject. How many people work here, and what do you think about working in such a large organization?

Vermet: The Detroit Diesel Corporation, as you drove up here to our World Headquarters today, we have some 3700 people on the payroll. There's probably more accurate a number available elsewhere. But just under 4,000 I guess. I enjoy that size. My initial goals were to be with General Motors, and if you add up all the people in GM, this is kind of a small pond. I was always interested in succeeding in a large organization where there was a lot of competition. This is still a plenty big company, and there's still plenty of people -- educated, bright, aggressive people. But I always enjoyed the concept of managing -- being a manager over a lot of people in a large company, so I get to deal with getting the job done. You have company politics, change in organization, change in leadership. So I find all those things challenging, and boy, there are a lot of people I don't know here. But I'm always amazed after being here 16 years how many I do know.

Q: Do you think it's important to be personally proud of yourself?

Vermet: I think it's vitally important to be proud of what you do or the products you sell. If you're not convinced that it's a good return on investment, that it's as good, if not better than the other people's, frankly, I don't think you have a chance of doing your job effectively, whether you're in engineering or sales. In the rating process, people used to talk about "attitude" and "enthusiasm," and I've always felt that that's something you can control yourself. I can't control my knowledge without doing a lot more work. But I can always control my enthusiasm. I'm in the sales department. So if anyone in the engineering or the manufacturing side asks me questions, I always try to paint a positive picture, and that's easy to do because it is positive. But I think it's very important that you believe in what you do and that shows. I think it shows in the people you talk to that they like doing business with someone that enjoys doing what they do and is proud of representing who they represent.

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Q: Just quickly one thing. We were talking about the team and working on a team. What other people do you come in contact with besides mechanical engineers? You're in sales, so I'm sure there's marketing people, or accounting people. Could you summarize the people whom you come into contact with to get your job done?

Vermet: The people that I come into contact with to get the job done varies greatly, whether I'm dealing with the customer side of the business or internally. I have constant communication with the engineering department, to assist or finetune the release of the product -- and that's everything from individual component engineers to their managers or directors, in getting the right products. The financial department. There are some customers that when I was in the bus department that we sold engines to, directly. As that account manager or the captain of that ship, I got involved with the financial side of the business, because if they weren't paying for the engines we shipped last month, manufacturing in the financial side wasn't too excited about sending them more. So you get to meet the CFO, from both the in-house side of the business, as well as from the OEM side. And from the customer standpoint, I've come up from the engineering ranks as a service guy. So I speak to technicians -- wrench turners, mechanics on the shop floors, maintenance managers. Owners of companies. Chairmen of multiple companies. One of the things that I enjoy about the position is that you can pretty much meet anybody, and I enjoy working the different levels of that. So whether it's internal to Detroit Diesel or external, anyone that utilizes an engine, above and below, you get to meet them. From captains of yachts to owners of corporations. So it's pretty diverse.

Q: In terms of finding new clients, networking is an important job?

Vermet: Networking I guess I would think is a broad term. It definitely helps to stay in touch with people from the past. I don't really network with any of my peers back from the University of Michigan days in engineering. But I do network and stay in touch with a lot of customers or manufacturers in the different jobs I've had. So I'm still in contact with some of the first people I've done business with in Alabama and Mississippi, and remarkably now Mississippi is part of the central region and some of those people exist. So I keep an exhaustive index, now electronically versus rubber bands around business cards, about people that I've met. And I periodically take time to call folks that I haven't heard from in a while and communicate with them, and that always leads to some other conversation -- with maybe an engine opportunity or maybe a job opportunity or someone that's looking for a job that we're interested in. So yes, it's very important, and with computer programs now, I'd track every person you ever met and load them in a database and only purge them when your memory couldn't handle any more.

Q: OK. I think we've covered everything. Thanks, Nick.

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