AGEC Industry Internship Final Report

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TDIndustries

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TDIndustries Internship

When I arrived at Texas A&M University three years ago, one of the first things I learned was the importance of the Aggie Ring. I was told that having an Aggie Ring on your finger meant that you earned your spot in the family that makes up current and former Aggies, and that having that little piece of gold on your ring to many was just as fulfilling as receiving a diploma. I even heard stories of students landing interviews and even receiving job offers, just because they had that Aggie Ring on their finger; proof that they received an education from one of the greatest schools in the country. This summer I interned for TDIndustries, a mechanical construction company. As an Agricultural business major, this seems like an unlikely company for me to work for. I do not have my Aggie Ring just yet (although I am very close) however being a part of the Aggie family led to an interview for fellow Aggies who work for TDIndustries, and they knew that I could bring hard work and a dedication to learn to their company. From there they helped me devise a plan for the summer in which I could support multiple partners at TD all while learning the tools of the trade.

First, a little bit about myself. My name is Michael Lockwood, I am an Agricultural Business major from San Antonio, Texas. I have had no prior experience in the construction industry, and when I landed the internship with TDIndustries I was really excited to see what it was like, and especially see how business is conducted in such an engineering-heavy field. During my application process for A&M, I often thought about pursuing an education in architecture. Having an artistic eye was an asset I felt would be valuable in construction. This report will focus on my main responsibilities as an intern, what A&M courses prepared me for
the job and what I wish I would have known, and how this internship will affect my future career plans.

Before I discuss my regular intern duties, we should learn about TDIndustries and the company’s history. TDIndustries is a mechanical construction company that specializes in commercial plumbing and HVAC. TDIndustries began as Texas Distributors, and since its beginning has believed in a servant-leadership approach to conducting business. This means that all partners are seen as equals, and serving both the customer and other partners are the most important pieces to being a successful company. This approach to business has landed TDIndustries on the Fortune 100 Best Companies to work for since the list began in 1998, which is an accomplishment they are extremely proud of and go to great lengths to retain each year. TDIndustries is involved in multiple aspects of the construction process, from designing to installation, and has completed work on many iconic buildings across the state of Texas including AT&T Stadium where the Dallas Cowboys play. TDIndustries corporate offices are located in Dallas, Texas, and TD has offices all over Texas and also in Arizona.

One of the first big tasks I was given when I started at TDIndustries required me to count the number of fixtures (sinks, toilets, etc…) in drawings for a certain assisted living home we were working on. The work does not sound like much, but it was important for me to get the right count on these fixtures, because we would then be purchasing them from our vendor. Being able to visit the sites of the projects that I was doing these counts for allowed me to see in person what I needed to be looking for in the drawings. It was very important to make sure I stayed in contact with the Project Manager and team of engineers, because every once in a while new prints of drawings would come out highlighting changes that were made to the design.
After tallying what I was confident were the correct figures for the fixtures, I would input them into a spreadsheet with corresponding prices that were given to my supervising project manager on the previous vendor quote. Soon after, we would schedule a meeting with the vendor rep who would provide updated prices for our fixtures and I could input the updated prices into my spreadsheet that would eventually be drafted into a purchase order. This was a task that I did on multiple projects all summer and it was a great feeling seeing my work be used for a very important (business) part of the construction process. I showed the partners at TD that I could be counted on and I felt that they appreciated and respected my input on these matters.

Drafting Purchase orders for many different projects was something that I quickly learned how to do at TD and became one of my main tasks throughout the summer. I really enjoyed calculating the numbers and seeing the piecemeal process of working to maintain a project budget. Purchase orders are composed from vendor quotes and fixture quantities, and a lot of times reaching out to different vendor reps from companies who sold the products that we needed was necessary to find the best possible prices. Drafting these documents also gave me a good deal of exposure to the type of equipment and services that are needed for different types of construction jobs. Whether I was buying copper piping, or paying a subcontracting crew for their services, I was able to see the scope of what many TD construction projects looked like. Through email and phone communication with many different vendors I was able to build positive relationships where these reps could trust that I would be efficient and effective when drafting purchase orders for them. The communication aspect of this part of the job was key for me, because I did not always have all the information I needed right in front of me to complete the task. I was commended by vendors and coworkers for my ability to “close loops”, and for not being afraid to reach out to someone for help when I needed it.
A portion of my internship at TDIndustries was spent working on jobsites or ‘in the field’ to get some firsthand experience of what it is like for Project Managers working on specific projects. One of the jobs that I shadowed a Project Manager on was a data center that was nearing completion. TD had provided all of the ductwork for heating and air conditioning as well as all of the plumbing for the entire building. I not only was able to observe how many of the workers and foreman completed their manual labor tasks, but I was specifically able to see how important the Project Manager’s role is in construction, even though that role is not very hands on. Project Managers need to be great communicators. They need to provide the equipment that their team needs to be successful, all while making sure the project is going at the correct pace according to the schedule. I witnessed heated arguments, as well as proud teamwork, all of which showcased how important it is for a Project Manager to remain composed and open-minded when leading a team at a jobsite. It was interesting to see how having a knowledge of both construction and business can be very useful when dealing with different companies all working on the same project. On top of learning how good “managerial skills” are import for any project manager, I spent many days in the Texas heat with the work crew! My time in the field definitely gave me an appreciation for the hard work these guys are performing day in and day out, no matter how uncomfortable it may be.

I never felt extremely overwhelmed during my internship this summer. There were many things that I had to learn for the first time because I had no experience in the industry, but there were also practices I had learned at Texas A&M that I was able to use in my day-to-day activities at TDIndustries. I took Dr. Seibert’s AGEC 340 last year, and while the firms in his examples were all Ag related, those businesses faced problems that any business can face, and it was interesting to see how those business reacted and compare that to how TDIndustries handled
adversity. At TDIndustries, safety is the most important factor in not only making sure a project is safe for TD partners, but also making sure that the finished product will be safe for inhabitants for many years. When rain water damaged a TD project because of negligence that eventually was found not to be TD’s fault, my supervisor made the decision to fix the mess immediately anyways, because everyone’s safety was what was most important. Many of my responsibilities required me to be proficient at using Microsoft Excel. Thankfully I had learned many useful programs and techniques in Dusty Menzies’ AGEC 217 so that whether I was drafting purchase orders or developing creative presentations for different projects, building complex spreadsheets was no problem for me. I feel like any good business employee should have some knowledge of accounting principles, and I was able to understand estimating and budgeting for different projects because of what I learned from Courtney Foster in Accounting 229. One of the project managers that I shadowed in the field actually studied accounting in college, but decided that he enjoyed construction and could use his business acumen to be successful in the field. He was able to show me how important it is to stay under a project budget.

I felt mostly prepared for everything that I faced during my internship, and I really trusted my problem solving abilities which certainly helped. Going into the field of construction and not having much of any previous experience, I knew that there was going to be a lot of learning on the fly. If there was something that I would have like to have been more prepared for it would be how to professionally make phone calls and draft emails. This was something that I was able to learn pretty quickly, but having those skills ready at the start of an internship, and even for the process of getting an internship would be ideal. This summer, a foreman at one of the bigger jobs the San Antonio office has ever done, responded to an email in a way that upset the general contractor. He did not know that he had done anything wrong, but it created a lot of unnecessary
tension on a project that was already very intense. A&M may have courses that go over these skills that I haven’t taken, but this would be the one thing I would have liked to have had better knowledge of from the start.

I had a great time during my internship this summer. I worked with some really great people and learned many valuable business skills that I can apply to career I have in the future. While I did enjoy the business aspects of this industry, I do not see myself pursuing a career in construction in the future. While the construction industry is fast-paced and demanding, it unfortunately did not peak my interest in the ways that I thought it could. This summer I had time to think about where I want to go from here. While I still do not know exactly what I want to do once I finish my undergrad, I have given serious thought to applying to graduate school. From here I will continue to find my passion and use the skills that I am good at to pursue other opportunities in the future!

I learned many valuable lessons this Summer that will not only help me in my future career, but also in life in general. I would tell someone who is interested in doing an internship, whether that be with TDIndustries or another firm in any field to go ahead and do it as long as they have some sort of interest in the field. I had an interest in the field of construction, and while that did not last throughout my internship, I am still proud of myself for pursuing my interests. I can say that I am better off today than I was at the beginning of the summer, and that is an exciting thought. Do not do an internship just because it’s a job, but seek an internship that will help you grow as an individual, no matter if that is the career you see yourself in or not. Through exploring my responsibilities, looking back on my training at A&M, and looking forward to the future, we have seen a glimpse of how I spent my summer with TDIndustries.