



I CAN LIFT A TRUCK WITH ONE HAND.

MITCH SANDERS | Manufacturing Intern
Gray Manufacturing Co., Inc.



MITCH'S STORY

I knew in high school that I wanted to take a welding class, but I wanted to do that for my own hobbies. I had no intentions of turning the skill into a job. Spending time in the class, I realized how many employment opportunities would come from having a skill like welding. During my senior year of high school, a family friend brought up the possibility of me finding a job at Gray as a welder, and at that point I began looking into it. By the time my last semester of high school arrived, I had talked to Gray about the possibility of working there after I graduated. I was really just waiting on graduation so I could take the next steps.

Actually, when I started exploring jobs as a welder I was really only looking for summer work since I planned on going to college. However, after working for Gray for most of the summer, I was offered the opportunity to continue to work part-time as I pursued my degree. I continued working through school as a welder for about a year and a half, and at that time, I was offered my current job in the manufacturing engineering department at Gray.



TYPICAL DAY

At Gray, we produce a wide variety of professional service equipment for the automotive, truck, and service vehicle industries. Our products range from jack stands, to floor service jacks, to mobile column lifts capable of raising a vehicle up to 69 inches off the ground without hydraulic or electrical lines connecting the individual lifts. Many of our products are operated by the use of air, hydraulics, or a combination of the two, which makes operating the product easier and safer for the user.

My days can easily vary from one to the next, but on any given day I can plan on spending some time in the office processing engineering change orders, designing tooling using 3D modeling software, or working on projects that involve changing our manufacturing processes to increase their efficiency. The beauty of this job, however, is that we are not bound to a desk all day, every day. Most of what we do involves input from the operators on the plant floor, so I can also plan on spending a significant amount of time each day out in the plant gathering information and input from other workers.



My best advice for students who may want to pursue a career in manufacturing is to take advantage of all of the great opportunities offered while you are still in high school. Every high school offers students the ability to attend the local tech school as an elective. There, you can receive training in skills associated with manufacturing -- and even put yourself in a position to get hired by a manufacturer directly out of high school. Learning these skills in high school not only prepares you for a job in those fields, but it saves you from having to pay for the classes yourself after you graduate.



A big misconception is that manufacturing jobs are for those who “weren’t cut out for college” and that the pay doesn’t compare to what someone might make with a college degree. The truth is that many of the workers in a manufacturing operation are in fact very intelligent, and simply chose to learn a trade and go to work instead of getting a degree. As far as pay for those types of jobs goes, in most cases a welder, machinist, or any other worker with a sought after skill set will have the opportunity to make just as much money and receive the same benefits as someone with a degree.



“I used to see jobs as either ‘office jobs’ or ‘floor jobs,’ but now I realize that there are jobs out there for those of us that like to work with our head and our hands and allow us to do just that.”



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