

Help Aspiring Professionals Kick Start their Career with Real-World Experience

By **Brendan Rokey**, *Intern*, Corporate Project Services, Wenger Manufacturing, Inc.

Being a young person staring at all the open roads ahead of you, wondering which path to choose, is both exciting and terrifying. I know this because that was me not too long ago.

When you're making decisions about what career path is right for you, it's exciting to anticipate what may be in store and believe the possibilities are endless. But at the same time, it's nerve-racking when you don't know exactly what you're getting into. It's human nature to second guess the choices you're trying to make and worry you won't choose the right ones.

Something amazing happened to me as I was looking down the path of technical school, not knowing what would be waiting on the other side. Full disclosure, I originally wanted to be an FBI detective, but upon further exploration learned quickly it wasn't the right path for me. Even technical school was unfamiliar territory and therefore made me a little bit nervous.

But then, through a series of fortunate events and connections, I soon felt really good about that decision, and the rest of that path started to become clearer.

I first made a connection with Corporate Project Services as a kid looking for a summer job



between school programs at Washburn Tech. CPS hired me as an intern after I finished drafting tech school and before I started the electrical technology program last fall.

At the end of the summer, CPS

offered me the opportunity to continue working and now I split my time between attending classes and working remotely from campus to support CPS activities. I'll move into a full-time role when I graduate.

As a side note, one unexpected benefit of my remote work arrangement is that it's made the transition to online classes during quarantine much easier. It's kind of a unique situation for a trade school, but fortunately for me I was already set up to work this way.

Taking a Chance on the Next Generation

I'm the youngest member of CPS and among the youngest employees at Wenger as a whole, and I appreciate the company's willingness to offer an alternative work arrangement that allows me to pursue my education while getting a jump start on a career path.

It's a mentorship arrangement, and through it I'm able to learn from experts, such as my direct supervisor, Anthony Schmid, and apply what I'm learning in the classroom.

I've been lucky to have managers above me, like Anthony, who care and are willing to help chart a path for me. CPS leadership really advocates goal setting and for everyone on the team to have a professional development plan.

Our director Jason Lang's statement to me was this: If I'm willing to invest in CPS later, they'll be willing to invest in me now.

When companies support young people and give them a leg up, I really think they're creating a better future for their own business. By being open to these alternative arrangements, they're building future generations of leaders and contributors in their workforce. They can teach the individual the exact skills he or she needs to excel in the role.

Nothing Beats Real-World Experience

My school is actually looking at devoting a portion of the school year to connecting students with companies where they can get a couple weeks of real-world, hands-on work experience, because they also see the great value for young people to have experiences like mine.

One thing is for certain, CPS is giving me opportunities most collegians don't get to take advantage of. It's helping me to have more confidence in the value I can bring to CPS because I'm learning the real world at the same time. I'll be in a really good place when I graduate and become a full-time CPS employee. I don't really have the stress of trying to find a job, so I can focus on finishing up classes. And, I won't need to go through the whole training

process, so I can hit the ground running as soon as I graduate.

This opportunity with CPS has given me a sense of direction and security to look forward to once I'm finished with school. I'm on a path I'm proud of and excited to continue the journey and see where it takes me!

If you'd like to learn more about CPS or connect with someone on our team, please [reach out to us](#).

[Corporate Project Services](#), a division of Wenger Manufacturing, is a dynamic group of planning specialists backed by Wenger's more than 80 years of process system supply to the industry. Our knowledge base and breadth of experience in extrusion processing and facilities construction is unsurpassed – and our commitment to excellence is recognized around the world.