



ERIN

How did I end up here? WSP has been the only company I've been happy working at. Which is weird, because I'm really good at what I do, but I've never been happy doing it, I think until I found a company that appreciates me, and I feel like I'm treated really well here. And so I've just stayed. I've been here about - oh actually, no, I just had my eight year anniversary this past month.

DANNIELE

Wow.

ERIN

And prior to that, I always had like two year jobs or I even had six month jobs. I've had one month jobs. [Laughs] So I'm constantly, I was always looking for something better. And yeah, this job came along and I've just stayed with it. I really enjoy it.

DANNIELE

That sounds awesome. I mean, don't need to move if you're being supported in that amazing way.

ERIN

Yeah, exactly. And it's, yeah, I'm very happy here. So I still see myself not wanting to leave, which for me is quite amazing after this length of time. [Laughs]

DANNIELE

Yeah. So, were there any key events or people in your life that helped you get to where you are now?

ERIN



ERIN

Yeah, especially since I never really, I never really knew what I wanted to do. I just kind of I flopped into this job. And it just, it developed from there, and I think it's turned into a really good career for me.

DANNIELE

That's awesome. So you've been supported through growing in your profession, and that's so cool. What has been one of your proudest accomplishments so far?

ERIN

I think it was about four years ago, actually, I decided to apply as a certified technician. I'd always been asked if I was a technician, anytime I would apply for a job. And I would always say, "Well, no, not really, I just have the skills to do it." But I was never, I never had those letters after my name that said that I actually knew what I was doing.

DANNIELE

Mm hmm.

ERIN

So, and I didn't take a traditional direction to this career, because I didn't go to school, really. I mean, I took my drafting certification, but that was it. I didn't, I don't have the credentials that say that I actually know what I'm doing. Whereas if you go to school, you graduate and that piece of paper automatically says that you know how to do your job. So for me, it was just I would have to say, I knew how to do my job and hope they believe me. And it always turned out good because I have never worked somewhere where someone has said, "Oh, we shouldn't hire you because you don't know what you're doing." So I decided to get my certification through AST BC, I applied for that. And it's a little bit of a process where you have to go and get references and you have to write sort of like a little report on your experience. And it took me quite a long time to put it together because I felt like, I never felt like I was qualified to do it because I hadn't gone to school. It was sort of like that whole imposter syndrome. I think I had really -

DANNIELE

Yeah.

ERIN

Yeah, I had it badly because I didn't go to school. And so I didn't think I deserved to be certified. And so I applied for the certification and I breezed through it. It was not a problem at all. So yeah, I got certified and I think that was probably one of the d as



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Awesome. I think that's a great summary of what this program is. I think it's great. So thinking back before you got your certificate and everything, what inspired you to pursue a career in STEM?

ERIN

It was probably my dad, if I think about it. He always treated me kind of like a boy, I was sort of a tomboy. I grew up with little brothers, and I never really was into the girly type things. So my dad, he would have me memorize, like he was an electrician, and he would bring you to work with,



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DANNIELE LIVENGOOD

Yeah, and I think that's something that people don't know a lot about, like the alternatives to taking on the debt



ERIN

Yeah. And if you were also pressed for money, which I was because I did have to end up paying for it on my own. So I wanted to get it done as fast as I could, so that I could start working and start making money because I was living in a not great situation, and I really wanted out of it. So I just worked my butt off to get out of there as quick as I can and not pay for another semester. [Laughs]

DANNIELE LIVENGOOD

Yeah, yeah, I hear that. So if you were to give any advice to students that are considering taking a certificate program like you do, what would you recommend for them to think about or to consider?

ERIN

Yeah, I would think that they should first decide that if they're just doing this because it's the cheap route, or because it's something that they actually want to do. Because if I look back now, I would have, if I had the choice, I would have taken a lot more schooling, I wouldn't have just taken a certification. But the situation I was in at the time, it wasn't an option. So I think you kind of have to decide if you're just doing it, because it's like I said, short and quick. Or if you're doing it because that's really what you want to do. Because a drafting career is a wonderful thing to do. There's nothing wrong with just wanting to do drafting for sure. But yeah, you just, I would have decided at the time to take more schooling and not feel insecure about my education my entire career. But if that's what you're happy doing and you're not going to feel that insecurity then fantastic, go for it.

DANNIELE

Awesome, great advice. All right, Erin, you're gonna have to bear with me for a second, we're gonna get a little bit negative. We know not everything in our careers is perfect. So I want you to share with me, maybe a less than great moment or a challenge that you've had to overcome along the way.

ERIN

Okay. I've had a few of them. Probably the one that I learned the most lessons from, I guess, because some things are just crappy. And they just, they're crappy. And there's no positive about them. [Laughs]

DANNIELE

Yeah.

ERIN

So I think my biggest challenge was I worked in an engineering firm with a lot of really aggressive type A engineers.

DANNIELE

Mm hmm.

ERIN

And when I say type A, I mean the kind of people that say exactly what they're thinking and are super career focused and like to work lots of hours. And it was a good job in that I got a lot of experience, but I worked with these guys and I was the only girl on the team. Which was a challenge. And I was also a mother at the time. Well, I mean, I still am. I was a newer mother then. And so we were expected to



Yeah.

ERIN

And then another one, where after that, and again, it's also related to clothing. I got asked to dress differently again another time and this was for the opposite reason, it was because my shirts were too tight, and I was distracting. And this again was in an engineering firm. [Laughs]

DANNIELE

Wow.

ERIN

And I - yeah, I didn't stay at that one for very long either, but it's not something that a man would ever have to consider -

DANNIELE

No.

ERIN

- [unintelligible] situation. The man comes to work in a suit and tie or khakis and a polo shirt and they're done. But whereas a woman has to think of another level all the time about if what she's wearing is appropriate or, and it was, it was super frustrating for me because obviously I thought in both situations, I was totally fine. But the men around me obviously thought differently, which is unfortunate.

DANNIELE

Yeah, yikes. You got some real kickers there. [Laughs]

ERIN

I know. Well, I've been doing this for over 20 years, so, I've seen it all, I guess. [Laughs]

DANNIELE

Yeah, yeah, for better or worse, but you know -

ERIN

Yeah, yeah, exactly.

DANNIELE

Again, coming back to, you know, you learn lessons from from these experiences and it tells you sometimes exactly where you don't want to work and what kinds of treatment you won't put up with at work. And I think those are good boundaries to find.

ERIN

Yeah, and I think it's a lot better than now. Like, even like the last, I guess, five years or so I think that that wouldn't stand at all.

DANNIELE



Yeah.

ERIN

So instead of drawing a line that represents a road, you're actually drawing a road so that you can get volumes from it and you can do cross sections and stuff like that. So that has changed drastically because that was definitely not an option 20 years ago, right? So I think it's just going to keep on bouncing like that. And it's one thing that scares me a little bit, because I like to stay on top of what I do. But I'm also kind of, I know I'm really good at what I do. And if I change that, I might not be so good at it. And it kind of scares me a little bit. So I'm encouraged to take training and to do stuff that allows me to advance my skills, which is wonderful. But being a home based employee, and being remote as well from the rest of my team makes it a little harder, because I can't just go and take a course somewhere because yeah, I live on the island. So I think it's going to be, it's going to keep moving that way where it's going to get more and more automated. And there's not going to be a lot of work for just draftspeople, we'll have to all be designers.

DANNIELE

Yeah.

ERIN

And I think it's just going to keep evolving from there. And hopefully I just keep evolving along with it and it's not going to be a struggle.

DANNIELE

That sounds cool. So Erin, building off that idea of how your field will be changing, in the next five to 10 years, where do you see your career path taking you?

ERIN

That's also something I've been thinking a lot about lately. Because I am sort of at the position in my career where I need to make some decisions, I think where I have the opportunity to go into management over being at a desk, I have the opportunity to actually manage people. And yeah, I think that's just, it's sort of the way we're encouraged to go when you get to a certain point in your career. And I'm not convinced that I want to do that.

DANNIELE

Yeah.

ERIN

So I've been really struggling with that over just like literally the last few months trying to decide what I should do. So my career may go that way. If I decide that I want to manage a group of technicians, and it's, I think maybe it's also one of those things where it's different and I don't necessarily like change that much. So it's either gonna go that way or I'm going to get some more education and get myself a higher certification. And then that will be enough to make me happy rather than going into management. And I really, I like the hands on stuff where I'm building things and designing things and working on plans. And I don't necessarily like having to deal with everyone's personalities.

DANNIELE



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Certainly not for everyone.

ERIN

I know. And I feel bad saying that because I'm encouraged like, I am outgoing, and I am friendly, but I don't think I'm aggressive enough to be a manager. So it's, I kind of, it's one of those things where I feel like if I don't do it



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life. And like I just probably the la



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I think dealing with stress is a lot fr



Because I don't like them. But I find it really therapeutic to just sit there and just do what comes out of my hand at the moment. My husband's always like, "Oh, that was so great. Let's hang it on the wall." And I'm like, "No, it's terrible." [Laughs] I let him put up one of my paintings in the bathroom. That's about it.

DANNIELE
Oh that's nice.

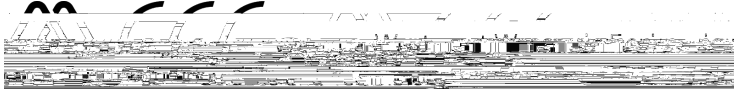
ERIN
But you know, I really like to paint and I really like cooking. I love gourmet cooking and I'm a vegetarian. So I try to get a little more creative because my husband and my son aren't vegetarian.

DANNIELE
Yeah, for sure.

ERIN
And so I try to really cook creatively.

DANNIELE
Yeah. Outside of, you know, all these great hobbies you have and outside of work, are there any causes or issues that you're really passionate about?

ERIN
I touched on it earlier, and that is my advancing women in engineering and technology. And I've always been passionate about trying to get more women into the industry. My boss is so tired of me, every time we need to hire somebody, I'm like, you need to look at the resumes of these women. Like, I work



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Because, like, we'll send out a hiring application and I won't get one woman on it, I'll get 50 men, but there will not be one resume from a woman. And it just, it kind of makes me sad because this is such a good career for women. It's got so much flexibility. You don't have to have a set schedule. I mean, you do in respect that you have to work with your peers at certain times. But if you want to work flexible hours, you can do it, and there's just, there's so much opportunity for women that, just, it frustrates me to no end that I do not get the resumes from them.

DANNIELE LIVENGOOD

Yeah, I think that's really one of the really uphill battles we're trying to fight with advancing women in engineering and technology. Like it's, you know, just not often considered. Or, you know, stories about not great work environments can turn people off. But like, as tt



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Oh, boy. I think if I had my choice, I would b

