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Engineers Make Great Inventors

By Lisa Parmley

Or is it that inventors make great engineers? Either way, they go hand-in-hand.

Engineers of virtually any specialty get paid to experiment with the technologies of today and add in improvements of their own. In the process, they often create new, useful inventions that may be eligible for a patent.

Engineers invent new technologies for the rest of us.

There are many engineers (otherwise known as inventors) in history. I'm sure you'll recognize the names of a few.

For instance, take Leonardo da Vinci. He drew plans for several flying machines, including a helicopter and a hang glider as well as many military machines. In addition, da Vinci may have made a great civil engineer as shown from his plans for a 720-foot bridge that was recently turned into a reality.

Another engineer/inventor is Eli Whitney. He invented the first cotton gin. Whitney is also credited with the creation of interchangeable parts. Oddly enough, the ability to interchange parts is thought to be a much more important and long lasting invention than the cotton gin (although that is all he is usually remembered for).

Orville and Wilbur Wright, otherwise known as the Wright Brothers are credited with the creation of a practical airplane. They actually wrote a patent application in 1903 which was rejected. Eventually, patent #821,393 for a "Flying Machine" was granted to them in 1906.

Fast forward to today, when inventors are rewarded for their labors with patents that can bring in large sums of money. A large number of the patents awarded today are granted to engineers. And the number of patents applied for keeps growing each and every year in the U.S.

If you choose this career field, you will no doubt be exposed to patents and quite possibly even apply for one yourself. Who knows? You could make history!

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Yesterday's Project Manager is Today's Project Engineer

By Ramakrishna Pochiraju

The rapid growth of technology, greater exposure to knowledge, higher levels of awareness are making the young project engineer act more and more like a project manager. What I mean is, today's project engineers are actively supervising new graduates, setting and monitoring schedules & budgets, interacting with clients and so on. A decade or so ago these duties were undertaken by project managers or supervisors who were promoted to that level largely because of seniority. They were promoted regardless of whether it is a right fit for them or not.

Now-a-days young/junior engineers are trusted with more increasing responsibility because of their ability to multitask with the help of cutting edge technology. This makes me wonder whether the technology is friend or foe to the younger engineers? Younger engineers are stuck with older/outdated titles but their responsibilities are growing and they are expected to do more and produce more. Younger engineers do the bulk of work and when it comes to the face value with clients and the company's brass, they are getting almost nothing. Could this be the reason why there is a higher turnaround in the companies with larger percentage of younger engineers.

Ramakrishna Pochiraju is registered professional engineer. He has over ten years of experience in serving local, state and federal clients as a consulting engineer in designing roads, highways and freeways.

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