



My experience in the apprenticeship program at Blum began in the summer of 1997. I had just finished up my junior year at West Mecklenburg High School, during which I was introduced to the apprenticeship program by a representative from Blum. The representative, who eventually became my first year trainer in the program, explained the highly technical and hands-on program during my technical drafting class. I was immediately intrigued by several aspects of the program, such as the ‘earning while learning’ aspect and the fact that it eventually led to a stable skilled labor career. It wasn’t long before I decided to go through the orientation in order to evaluate the program firsthand. After completing the orientation, I knew I had found the path I wanted to take after graduation from high school. Blum extended an offer for me to join the apprenticeship program, and I happily accepted.

As I advanced through the first few years of the program, I was presented with new and interesting challenges almost every day. Whether it was working with hand tools to perfect manual craftsmanship or working on the various milling machines, lathes, drill presses, or tool grinder, there was always something new to learn. Being a perfectionist, I was pleased with the amount of time we spent on each subject before moving on so that I could acquire the skill to do a job and feel comfortable with it. The low instructor-to-student ratio also ensured quality training while learning new skills. I was pleased most of all with the fact that I was soon able to take raw materials and create finished tools or other work pieces using a drawing, measuring instruments, and the metalworking machines.

Being able to go to college and not have to worry about the cost of tuition was also a big plus. The classes which I and my colleagues took during the program complimented the skills we learned at work. Blueprint reading, CNC machining, metrology, and strengths of materials are just some of the courses which added to our knowledge and allowed us to become skilled craftsmen.

While in my fourth year, I decided to pursue a career in the Quality Assurance department. Soon after joining the QA team, I was able to use all of my training as an apprentice as a foundation for learning the new skills required to work as a QA technician. During this time I was also able to work with several people from Austria, which exposed me to some aspects of different culture and language. I made it a point to learn the German language. In 2002 I was offered the opportunity to take part in a sort of exchange program to work for a year at Blum Austria. I was thrilled at the opportunity and accepted. I spend almost all of 2003 living and working in Austria with my wife, during which time we immersed ourselves in a different culture and language. After this life-changing event, I returned to Blum USA, where I have been continuing my education to the point of earning multiple certifications from the American Society for Quality (ASQ). I now have a solid career with the apprenticeship program as a solid starting point and foundation for everything I have achieved so far.

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