

Tips for Upcoming College Graduates

1. Communication skills are essential

The best engineering skills will not be sufficient if you cannot communicate effectively with your co-workers and clients. Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses and address the problem areas. Take a public speaking course or a writing course.

2. Learn more than your classes taught you

You must be willing and excited about learning as it will continue for your entire career. Your college education is only a small part of your preparation. Read trade magazines such as Modern Steel Construction and train yourself in the various Codes and areas of design. Take advantage of internship or co-op opportunities.

3. Knowledge of Revit and AutoCAD is critical

Recognize that the future of the industry includes BIM and prepare yourself for it.

4. Get a variety of experience

The structural engineering field is vast. Young engineers should try to gain experience on multiple aspects of projects and try not to get trapped into one area of design. Also, try to work with as many senior engineers as you can. From them, you can gain wisdom, judgment skills and observe management styles that will help you in the future.

5. Join the community

Get out and meet people. Join one or two of the industry organizations. If the company has a softball team or another organization, get involved. Connections that you make early in your career will lead to a bigger network of potential future clients. In addition, the more well-rounded that you are as an individual, the better engineer you will be.

6. Be prepared for challenge

While experiencing the excitement that a career in structural engineering brings, be prepared for the challenges of having a job. Deadlines, multi-tasking, and other day to day challenges can get discouraging. Look beyond these difficulties and recognize the excitement of being part of a team that is building a project that you will outlast you and your children

7. Get an early start on your track to becoming a Professional Engineer

Take the Engineer-In-Training Exam while you are still in or just graduated from school. Don't wait, it never gets easier. Getting your license is an important step in a career. Preparation for the exam also gives you an opportunity to learn about areas of design that may be outside your typical fields.

8. Structures don't understand technology

Complex analysis models always produce volumes of great output but are useless unless it represents the behavior of the building. Always verify your analysis with basic engineering principles and judgment.