**Transcript of Interview:**

KATHRYN: Okay, umm so let’s see. What is your background? Education, current position…

DAVID: What is my background? So I am a degreed engineer, so educated to the level of Master of Engineering. I am chartered, professionally chartered.

KATHRYN: What does that mean?

DAVID: I am licensed to be a professional engineer.

KATHRYN: Were you licensed here or in the UK?

DAVID: The UK.

KATHRYN: Does that transfer here or?

DAVID: No. If I wanted to, that allows me to design certain things and practice on certain things. Umm and then what’s my role. I’m the vice president of engineering for a Fortune 50 company.

KATHRYN: Okay. Umm what kind of positions have you held before your current job?

DAVID: So, I’ve been an operations manager in a factory. I’ve been an umm, what we call an innovation commercialization manager.

KATHRYN: Okay, what does that do?

DAVID: Well, that’s when we’ve got a new product which has come out of a research lab. How do we convert it into something we can manufacture in factories?

KATHRYN: Okay.

DAVID: Umm, I’ve been a quality manager. I’ve been what we call a TPM leader.

KATHRYN: What does that mean?

DAVID: Total Productive Manufacturing. So that’s about continuous improvement.

KATHRYN: We just learned about that!

DAVID: Oh yeah?

KATHRYN: Yeah.

DAVID: Umm, I’ve been a strategic project manager. So that was involved in reconfiguring our manufacturing network and running the investment projects. And, obviously, I’ve been a, umm, you know, an engineering and technology manager. So investigating new ways to do things, and you’ve got capital projects to plan. So there you go. That’s, I think, a summary of the roles I’ve had in Unilever over the years.

KATHRYN: How did you decide to enter your career path, and what did you do to prepare for it?

DAVID: So, well kind of like you, I was always mathematical and technical, so it was kind of obvious that I would do something to do with numbers and science, but I didn’t want to be a scientist. I wanted to do something more practical. Umm, and, when I was looking at the engineering disciplines, I didn’t really want to be a civil engineer or a mechanical engineer, and I was never very good at the electrical bits, so I kind of just fell into chemical and process engineering, because I liked chemistry.

KATHRYN: So, what did you do prepare for chemical engineering?

DAVID: Umm, well obviously the studies I chose when I was a high school student were scientific and mathematical classes, physics and chemistry based.

KATHRYN: Mmhmm.

DAVID: Umm, I actually got the chance to talk to, umm, someone who had recently graduated from university as an engineer, and umm, that helped me make the decision. And then I, when I was in university, you know, like you’re doing, I got the chance to do an internship using my chemical engineering experience, and I applied to companies where they were looking for chemical engineering students, so. And I got a place on the Unilever Engineering Management Training Program.

KATHRYN: What types of work do you do?

DAVID: What types of work do I do today? So, I do, well I do a lot of what I would call manufacturing and technology development, and equipment development work. We need a new way to make this thing faster, or we need to make it cheaper, or we need to make it to a higher quality. So I do a lot of work on equipment development. Umm, I am involved in the management of Unilever’s capital investment program, so where do we invest money and how much money can we invest. Umm, I work with the research and development teams on new products and new package innovation programs. I work a lot with engineers themselves on their skills and personal development. And then I work a lot with other parts of Unilever’s organization, so finance, quality, sustainability, manufacturing, on what does engineering need to do to enable those things to function properly?

KATHRYN: Okay, do you have or have you had a mentor or a coach?

DAVID: Sure, over the years, definitely, several different people.

KATHRYN: Okay, what is, like, one big thing that you’ve learned from one of them, or, like, who was your favorite or something? Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

DAVID: So, in different parts of my career, I think in the earlier parts of my career someone really helped me to be an engineer, and really helped me understand what is the role, or what does a good engineer do? You know, how do engineers add value to Unilever? Umm, I think when I was in a manufacturing role, I had people help me with, what does it take to manage and lead people? Because, unfortunately, people don’t always do what you want them to, so how do you actually lead a big group of people? And then, you know, in the last couple of roles, people like Nikki have helped me in understanding how you build integrated business strategy and technical strategy to get that, and really create a new, new capabilities and market differentiating, or brand differentiating capabilities, a competitive advantage I believe it’s called.

KATHRYN: Do you have or have you had a mentee?

DAVID: Sure. Lots of people who have worked for me or, people who have worked for me and then gone on to different jobs have stayed in touch and I’ve helped them with their new jobs and new challenges and questions and what have you.

KATHRYN: What are the most rewarding aspects of your job?

DAVID: Umm, I think it’s more of the people side more than the engineering side. Helping people, you know, exceed their personal expectations, perform beyond uhh levels they thought they could perform, helping them get to the next steps in their career.

KATHRYN: Okay, what career advice would you give to an engineering sophomore?

DAVID: What career device would I give to an engineering sophomore?

KATHRYN: Career advice.

DAVID: Yeah, like you? Umm, so, you know, I, you know, I have no idea what the world will look like in twenty years’ time. But it will look very different from the industrial world that I’ve grown up in. Umm, I don’t think companies like Unilever will operate like they do today. Umm, so I think engineers and people with good technical skills umm well I think they are going to be in very high demand. So I think you’ve got to be prepared to work with anybody in the world. You’ve got to be prepared to work with anybody. And you’ve got to, you know I’ve always worked with people in, you know, food and personal care. I think the ability to work in different industries and think creatively and innovatively will be more important than it ever has been. And I think actually, being prepared to be your own, your own company. I don’t think working for a big company now will be where all the action is. I think it’s creating your own brand, your own competitive differentiation. I think what you’re going to see is that.

KATHRYN: Okay. Anything else you want to say about engineering?

DAVID: Umm, I just think, whether it’s the year 2050 or it’s the year 1750, engineers are the people who change the world. So, be it James Watt who invented the steam engine or, you know, Michael Faraday who invented the electric motor, or be it Steve Jobs or whoever who invented the computer, engineers transform the world. So, someone like Katie Atherton will solve or cure cancer, you know, someone will cure or you know… If you think about what are the greatest things that have changed people’s lives, I mean you list them out and they are the ability to provide clean water, the ability to put plumbing systems in, and toilets! I mean toilets, we take for granted, but that is a massive engineering invention. Electrical power distribution. Without that I mean our quality of life would be impossible to live without that. Everyone talks about the internet being the great one. The internet is an outcome of all those things. You go to countries in the world where they don’t have toilets. Guess what? They’re not worried about the bloody internet. So there’s things engineers have done which have really transformed the world.

KATHRYN: Okay.

DAVID: Alright? So think transformative-ly, not incrementally.

KATHRYN: Okay.

DAVID: Alright?

KATHRYN: Thank you.

DAVID: Alright!