



MANUFACTURING CAREER PROFILE: **FINDING THE RIGHT CAREER FIT**

Jerald Stimage and Elliott Parker are both Plan Shift Supervisors at ICL Group – a leading global specialty minerals company – and both built successful careers in manufacturing, but their pathways to where they are now were very different.

Stimage studied information technology at St. Louis Community College before a new opportunity led him into the chemical manufacturing field. Parker got his start through a personal connection, taking a job mixing paint and making epoxy for a small, family-owned business. By networking and being open to new opportunities, Stimage and Parker found their niche in the manufacturing industry.

Discovering Pathways to Leadership

Parker eventually took a job at Jost Chemical Co. and demonstrated his excellent work ethic which helped him become a supervisor within 15 months. He later transferred to ICL Group after hearing good things about the company from a former coworker.

“The company culture has been very welcoming and supportive,” Parker said. “From my peers to leadership, everyone is just a phone call away if you need help.”

Stimage had initially worked the packaging lines for a pharmaceutical company. When a chemical operator position became available, he pursued it and discovered

a passion for the job. Taking on a leadership role over time, Stimage eventually applied to be a supervisor at ICL. He enjoys how the job is “faster-paced and more hands-on.”

“A lot of my previous jobs were spent working in front of a computer,” he said. “At ICL, you get more involved and get a better understanding of how things work.”

The Value of Robust Training

As Plan Shift Supervisors, Stimage and Parker are responsible for making sure the daily manufacturing processes at ICL run smoothly from department

to department. They ensure maintenance handles priority issues in a timely manner and help operators troubleshoot issues to keep the plant running efficiently.

“ICL is very thorough in their training, especially regarding safety,” Parker said. “The operations leaders will give you the rundown on everything you need to check during your shift.”

ICL Group recently partnered with ConstructReach to expand its training and community outreach programs. ICL was building a lithium iron phosphate (LFP) manufacturing plant in St. Louis, which would generate many well-paying jobs. As a result, the company wanted to create programming to amplify its job training with ConstructReach’s e-learning modules, designed to educate new and experienced workers about manufacturing job responsibilities and workplace safety, as well as help them develop the skill sets needed to succeed in the industry. All shift leaders at ICL now complete DIG (Diversity Inclusion Group) training or DIB (Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging) workforce development.

“I think the program is a great starter kit for someone who is new to the workforce,” Stimage said. “The content is very informative and relevant and includes interviews with people working in the industry.”

Parker agreed, saying, **“The topics were even helpful for someone like me who has 23 years of experience in this field.”**

Every Job Is a Learning Opportunity

Stimage and Parker plan to continue growing into future leadership positions at ICL. They also both want to help connect others with the manufacturing industry. Stimage said he never would have thought to change careers if someone had not given him the opportunity to learn more about chemical manufacturing.

“Manufacturing is one of the best fields to get into because there is a lot of room to grow,” Stimage said. “Absorb as much information as you can from your experienced coworkers and apply everything you learn to keep improving.”

“Find your niche,” Parker said. “You can find jobs you enjoy in both the manufacturing and construction industries and earn a living doing so.”

ConstructReach will continue to assist ICL with workforce development and community outreach, including expanding scholarship opportunities, implementing DEI initiatives, and planning events to increase community engagement.

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