**Kelly Metcalf, O’Neil and Associates**

My name is Kelly Metcalf. I’m a Project Manager and Technical Writer at O’Neil and Associates. At O’Neil we do product support. We do everything - repair, diagnosis, operation, training - any kind of process that a company feels they need to communicate to their customers or their employees. That’s where we become involved. I author various types of instructions for any kind of original equipment manufacturer - OEM’s. I actually will interface with the client and see what their needs are, and then we author the corresponding instructions. We have authored everything from a blender to a military vehicle. Ultimately, what we’re trying to do is provide a satisfying experience for the end user that enables them to quickly and efficiently repair the equipment that they’re working on.

There is a very enjoyable aspect of this job where you’re constantly, you know, bleeding-edge technology. You’re learning about new equipment that many people don’t even know exists to this point. We service both the defense and commercial industries, and one of the really rewarding aspects of servicing those industries is when you get feedback that the manual or instructions that you wrote helped someone that may be on the side of the road in a war-torn country and is in dire need of fixing their vehicle and getting back to a safe place. Or even when you’re dealing commercially, and you hear of a manufacturing plant that down time is just critical. They’re losing money for every second that their equipment is down, and you played a part in getting that equipment back up and running.

We’ll receive raw engineering data and a lot of what we do is thorough evaluation of that data and kind of identifying what’s pertinent to the end user, and how to make that information easy to read and easy to use. Our workshop enables us to have the customer also provide the equipment. And we actually physically tear down and that ensures the accuracy of the content. Being able to physically do a task as opposed to simulating it ensures the accuracy of the instructions that we author. It’s a procedure we call validation and verification.

B-roll audio:

It’s the same torque isn’t it?

Between the MH50 and the ….

I’m also project manager so I’m responsible for identifying the scope of projects, developing plans and schedules, meeting deadlines.

B-roll audio:

But there will be three ongoing panel reviews. They’ll be kind of milestone based.

But I also have a team of four technical writers, and I’m responsible for training these individuals and making sure that they’re the best employees that they can be.

Obviously, there are technical writing certifications and degrees, but that being said, it’s very hard to supplement hands-on experience and specialized skilled trade training. But what is easier to train in is grammar and writing style. And so typically, we look for someone that has that hands-on experience, and then we train them up on the writing aspect.

My family owned what was probably the largest dump trucking company in the Dayton metro area. So from the time I was very young, I was heavily involved in that business. And not only did it pique my interest in the transportation industry and internal combustion engines, but it also gave me insight into the employee-employer dynamic and how people can work together and accomplish goals.

I loved creative writing and math, so obviously this field kinda suited the things that I was interested in in high school. As soon as I graduated high school, I went into the workforce. Being from a family-owned business that was in the transportation industry, it was a very easy transition. But I did receive several certifications. They’re diesel repair and diagnosis classes, HVAC systems, and these were usually put on by the truck manufacturers and paid for by my employers.

I had worked as a diesel tech for approximately eight years, and so I was looking for a line of work that was more challenging, but also less physically demanding. And I came across a posting for a technical writing job that required experience in diesel engine diagnosis, but also required strong computer skills. And I felt like these were areas I was very strong in. And I just felt like that was a perfect fit for me.

One of the things I really enjoy about this job is that typical days are hard to describe. There’s not many of them. But most days, I’ll usually have a meeting early in the morning with my team to kinda identify our plan for the day. And then I will review our project plan and schedule, make sure that we’re on task. And then you can find me in our workshop tearing down equipment and also pitching in on the authoring aspect as well.

Having good communication skills is key, but if you’re an inquisitive mind, if you like to learn how things work, then this is an ideal line of work for you. When I was a diesel technician, one of the frustrating aspects is I kinda felt like there was a very low ceiling, and that the work was very redundant and I was doing a lot of the same tasks repeatedly. Now getting out of bed is very easy in the morning. I know I have a new challenge in front of me and I know if I rise to that challenge, not only will I be rewarded here, but I’ll have internal satisfaction and know that I accomplished something and take pride in that work.