

STEM SPOTLIGHT



PROFESSIONAL: T.J. HERRING

NAME: T.J. Herring
COMPANY: AutoZone
TITLE: I.T Architect

DEGREE/CERTIFICATION: Bachelor of Business Administration in Management Information Systems
COLLEGE: University of Memphis

Q: How did you select your college major, certification program, or career path?

A: At first, I was a Civil Engineering major because my friends were also. I soon realized that it was not for me. I had always been a huge fan of Computer technology. So, I began researching the requirements Computer Science and M.I.S degrees. I eventually selected M.I.S.

Q: What was the biggest influence in your selection of career path?

A: Having a big background of being a Computer “Geek”. I taught myself how to program on a Commodore 64 computer when I was 13. Following that, I learned how to build computers from scratch and configure them to perform optimally. I chose the M.I.S degree over Computer Science because it required me to take many core business classes like accounting and finance. The business education that I received was very useful for my career growth at AutoZone.

Q: If you could go back to high school and select any elective course to take that would have better prepared you for college/career, what would it be?

A: Well, I mostly took all the electives that I enjoyed like computer science and music. I wish my high school would have offered a course to prepare me for being more mature in my first few years of college!



Q: What is your favorite aspect of your job?

A: That is a tough question. It’s hard to pick a favorite. It is great to see how the work that I do directly impacts our Sales Revenue. It is also great to have a career that is so in demand and always changing. I am continuously learning new things about Computer technology. It is definitely not boring.



Q: How do you/your company make a positive impact on society/our community?

A: AutoZone is very active in Memphis. There are numerous sponsorships like AutoZone Park, and The AutoZone Liberty Bowl. Also, we are active with many local charities like the Food Bank and United Way. I am very proud of the positive impact that AutoZone has had on the Memphis area.

Q: What's the most interesting thing you have been able to do in your career?

A: I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to contribute to many great projects over the years. One in particular that was a great experience was to help in the creation of Z-net. It is a set of software programs that are used by our Store AutoZoners to help find the right parts for our customers vehicles. Our team received the "Starters Club" award which is the highest award given at our yearly company meeting.

Q: What makes you get up each morning excited about your profession?

A: I.T. is a great profession because I get to solve problems on a daily basis. I often wake up in the middle of the night with ideas on how to solve a problem that I have been working on the previous day. Normally, I call my work phone and leave myself a voice-mail so that I don't forget the idea the next day.

Q: What advice would you share with K-12 students who are considering your profession?

A: Learn a programming language as soon as you can. Try to build your own website or game. There are numerous free tools that you can use like "Unity" the 3d game engine. Next, learn how to install, configure and use the Linux and Windows operating systems. The earlier you learn these foundational skills the better. Those skills are important even if you choose a non-programming IT career like: System Networking, Security System Administration, or Project Management.