

*Jobs is a history of the 16 different occupations the author held throughout his career. The lessons learned in each position. The author made a bucket full of mistakes in his career – learn from them, don't do the same!*

## **Jobs**

By David R. Longsderff

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**"YOU CAN'T MAKE THIS STUFF UP!"**

**A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF LESSONS LEARNED  
THROUGHOUT A 40 + YEAR CAREER IN BUSINESS**

# **JOBS**



**NEVER STOP LEARNING AND PLANNING  
FOR YOUR FUTURE**

**DAVID R. LONGSDERFF**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
Developmental Jobs .....	3
1. Newspaper Boy .....	3
2. Campus Sportswear Factory .....	7
3. Grocery Store (HQ Sunbury, PA).....	11
4. Large Steel Bridge Structures.....	13
Journeyman Jobs.....	19
5. Burndy Corporation, TERMAC Division; Sales Engineer.....	19
6. Product Manager .....	29
7. GTE Products Corp / Sylvania - Industrial Marketing Manager .....	33
8. Bulova Technologies, Inc – Marketing Manager.....	39
9. Framatome Connectors International (FCI) – Telecom Market Manager.....	47
Professional Jobs.....	55
10. Thermacore International Inc. – Vice President, Sales & Marketing.....	55
11. Thermacore International, Inc. – Vice President, General Manager .....	59
12. GrafTech International, AET Division – Director of Sales & Marketing, ETM.....	65
13. What do I do now?!? – 9 months off... ..	87
Post-Career Jobs.....	91
14. PRHI – Owings Mills, MD.....	91
15. Kybon Carbon Technologies – Germany and Ningbo, China .....	103
16. AMH – a networking company .....	107
17. HealthyU Insurance.....	119
Final Thoughts.....	123

## INTRODUCTION

This book is broken up into several sections identified by the type of job I was in at different stages of my business career. Each chapter describes a different job I held; if my basic responsibilities didn't shift when I was promoted, all was kept in the same chapter. If responsibilities did shift, a new chapter was required.

I'm conservative. A white anglo saxon protestant (WASP) that didn't have the wealth associated with that demographic while growing up. I am fiscally conservative; some would say cheap. I was taught a strong work ethic at a very young age, as you're about to hear. I am socially conservative; I have never voted anything other than Republican in my voting career. Based on all of that, I belong on the "most endangered list" in America...

My goal is to give young people some insight into the kind of companies they could and should be looking to work for. As well as the kind of companies they should avoid.

I've attempted to protect the identities of individuals who might be presented in what some might interpret as a negative light. If you feel slighted by the words inside, it's not you I'm writing about. These are my opinions based on the circumstances that occurred at the time.

The level of training provided by a company, as a formal program that they make you aware of in the interview process, is a great indicator as to how serious they take their company culture. And it tells you how much of an investment they're willing to make in you, to help you be successful. Which in turn makes them successful.

The core of the book, however, is the "what did I learn" paragraph(s) at the end of each chapter. Just trying to impart some "lifelong learning"!

# JOBS

## DEVELOPMENTAL JOBS

### 1. Newspaper Boy

It really wasn't my first job – my aunt ran a beauty shop in Pine Grove, Pennsylvania, which my family and I visited typically 3 of 4 weekends a month. There were 3 old maid aunts on my mom's side of the family that resided in Pine Grove. This aunt, Bessie, paid my sister and I to clean up the floor of her beauty shop. Sweep up all the hair. We would typically make 25 or 50 cents. We were immediate consumers, as we'd take that newly earned bounty down the street to the Five & Dime Store in Pine Grove to buy candy or cheap toys. Sometimes we were there for an hour, not being able to make up our minds what we wanted. For those of you who have never heard of a "Five & Dime" store, ask your grandma.

But a newspaper delivery route was the first time I was forced to interface directly with the consumer. I was 12 years old. And it was the first step in my education regarding the American household as a direct consumer. My first route was a morning paper, required getting up at 5 am, walking down to the end of our block to pick up the papers. Depending on the time of year, it was dark when I started and dark when I finished. I'd slide them into my over-the-head newspaper bag that had large pockets in front and back. The goal was to try and balance them – not easy to do as I took off trotting the route. It required taking every paper to the front screen door of every house, opening it up, placing the paper inside, then running to the next house. I quickly came to realize the morning route was easy to deal with – dogs were asleep, and so were the people for the most part! So, the only time I had to deal with customers was when I collected the price of the paper. Yes, I had to walk house to house across the entire route. I would go once a week, an evening after dinner, looking for the \$2.25 a week to be paid in cash. Several

times I was asked to take a check – took it a few times, then started asking them to pay for a month if they wanted to pay with a check. But it was a cash business.

My Distribution Manager, or boss, was a personable guy, very easy-going, he'd come and collect from me once a month. He was flat out charming, very laid back, really was more interested in having a conversation with my parents than myself. Some of my customers were easy to like, some weren't. There was one elderly lady who lost her husband during the time I had the route. She would give me a caramel covered popcorn ball once a month when I came to collect. Enjoyed going there! There were other customers who insisted I do the calculation of where the \$2.25 / week came from. *Every week*. When it rained, guess who didn't receive a perfectly dry paper? Call it the Golden Rule, call it "Giver's Gain", to me it was a lesson in treating your customers (and suppliers!) as you wish to be treated. I realized at an early age that some customers cost you much more to do business with than others.

After several years the evening paper route became available, which most considered an upgrade or promotion. Most likely because they didn't require the 5 am early rise. The evening papers were delivered around 3:30 every afternoon, including Saturday's, to the same corner down the street. But the evening paper also included delivering the Sunday morning paper – which as I recall was about \$1.50 and rose over \$2 a piece in the 3 years or so I delivered papers. The big differences between the morning and evening papers? The morning paper was considered more liberal, left wing, a Democrat party kind of editorial group. But it also had much better sports coverage, as you'd get the results of all the previous nights' games, from little league through the professional ranks. The evening paper was considered more conservative, right leaning, Republican party kind of editorial group. The papers had different staffs, but were owned and printed by the same (family controlled) company in Lancaster, PA. How many small towns had two different newspapers? What was surprising, even today, is that Lancaster County is 65% Republican – but that is dropping rapidly.

What else did I learn, other than treating your customers as you wish to be treated? Thinking back, would a 12-year-old *today* be willing to do that job? In our area there are no such things as neighborhood newspaper boys or girls any longer. A “driver” races down your street, either tosses a plastic covered paper into your driveway, or shoves it into your mailbox. You get billed – annually. No walking house to house and begging to be paid for last weeks’ paper deliveries. Is it safer for the newspaper people involved? Sure is, but it eliminated an opportunity for young teenagers. Today delivering papers is a moonlighting or side hustle. But then again look at what’s happened to the newspaper business overall.

Starting with the USAYesterday, a “national” newspaper launched to capture the country as it’s market, the business has changed significantly. I came to know the USA Yesterday, as the paper in the lobby of hotels. Sometimes, but rarely, with the leading business journal of the nation as well. But it was there every morning, had the biggest stories of the prior day in it. But it had nothing that was local coverage, and very little that was state coverage, just a bit that was regional in nature. When I travelled internationally, I would search for that paper in hotel lobbies or business lounges, wanting a taste for what was going on at home.

Those two Lancaster County papers I delivered as a 12-year-old and into my early teens. They each declined to the point where eventually the owners decided to merge them, eliminating the morning version. They blended the names of the papers. In a county with a heavily right leaning population, they originally stated they would provide “both perspectives”. Unfortunately, they’ve become more left leaning, and their circulation has suffered from it. Not sure I understand their reasons for moving to the left of center. The final straw for me was their editors recommending voting for Hillary Clinton in 2016 when Donald Trump was elected. I subscribed to the leading business journal online, and only received the Sunday edition of the Lancaster paper. And still do such today.

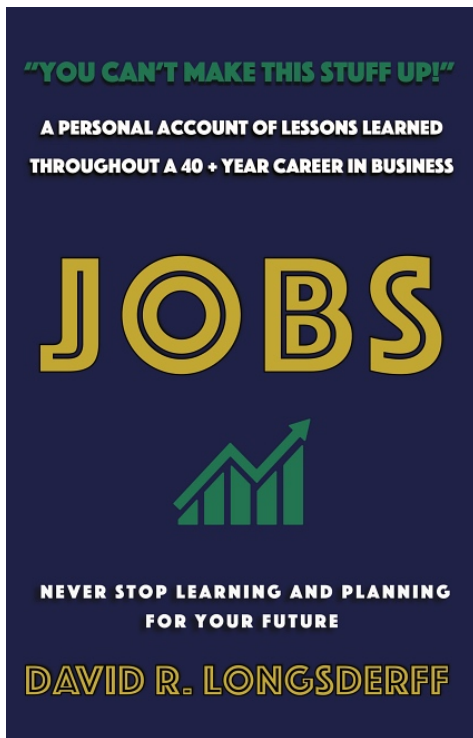
How have we gone from 12-year old’s’ delivering newspapers door to door, to parents not expecting their kids to work till after they’re out of school? Be that high school or college, where do we expect them to obtain *any* kind of



work ethic? Just a smidgeon of work ethic would go a long, long way in this country right now. I'm fortunate my parents installed a work ethic in me, and I'm happy I still have it.

One thing I'll rate each company I worked for in my career on is training. How well did they prepare you by learning about the culture of the company, explaining expectations, and giving you the tools to be successful. I'll rate each on a scale of 1 – 10. The newspaper position I'd give a 6 – they gave you some of the tools, explained your job fairly well, but didn't prepare you for dealing with the customer.

Again, I learned at an early age that it's difficult to be all-things-to-all-people. There are some customers you wish you could or *need* to fire. They're not worth the time and aggravation you spend on them. So again, where does that \$2.25 charge come from?



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