



Degrees@Work

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Video transcript

Casburn Spencer testimonial

OK, my name is Casburn Spencer. I work at Arrigo Enterprises in West Palm Beach, Florida. I've been working for them for maybe 14 years. I started here as a technician doing automotive repairs and it's what I've always done. I'm a senior technician today and that's basically where I am today in my career. I've already completed an associate degree. My degree was in communications and I've already completed part of it. I do want to complete my bachelor's degree. The first part was very informative and challenging and I do want to go on to the next step.

The CEO of FCA was speaking and he said that they were going to provide a college education for all Chrysler employees. And I heard this and I ran with the ball. I went and did my research. I was probably one of the first students who signed up because before it even officially hit our dealership, I was already signed up. I'm a firm believer in advancing yourself and, you know, the education part of it.

Well, the big thing that really pulled me to it. Well, maybe a couple of factors. The fact that they were going to pay my tuition and my books and everything, and that I could do it online. So I was very eager. I signed up. I was first in line and the coursework was really exciting for me because everything that I thought it was going to be, it was.

When you start something new it takes some time to figure out what it is they're asking of you. But if your success coach works with you the right way, I think they get you to understand what is expected. OK, I've got to do my discussions. I've got to interact with my classmates, and I have periodic assignments that come up. Once I got into the flow of that it really made it easier for me to look ahead and prepare myself and, you know, meet the requirements of the program. It wasn't extremely painful for me. I spent, maybe, six or seven hours a week per class in the beginning. And as you go along that might increase a little bit because you have papers due and things like that, but the process was really good. I can't complain.

I already have a really good career. So when I went to college and I started with Strayer they wanted me to do a business course, and I've got this thing where I never pick what people pick for me. I want to pick for myself. So I went and looked through the thing and many years ago, maybe 20 years ago, I had done the Comp TIA Plus certification because I wanted to get into computers and there was this course I saw that had a lot of computer stuff and when I saw that I said, "OK, this is what I want to do." And that's what I chose. They were fine with me doing that course but it was basically because I'm very interested in computers

and communication networks. How to set them up, how to do security, how to do networking of business computers and things like that. That was the bulk of what this course was preparing me for.

Well, my supervisor was very supportive. He allowed me to do whatever I needed to do to get into the program. He was very forthcoming about getting my documents signed. A few times I had major papers due and, you know, those days I didn't work full days. But there were a few times where finals were coming up and I'm up until two or three in the morning and I'd have to call in late. He was fully understanding and worked with me and encouraged me the whole way. A couple of times they highlighted what me and my wife were doing in the newsletter and, you know, they were really proud of what I was doing; proud of my accomplishment. You know, they know what it takes to come to work every day and work in the heat and the weather and then at the end of the day go back to doing school at night. It's a sacrifice but they work with me. They were good to me about it.

I work on a team of technicians and we have a team leader who oversees the work we do. I'm really a senior technician now because I have all my Chrysler certification, but I also have my college degree, and this has put me in up in a point of readiness to make that next step. My employer might not have that position for me right now, but in the future if it comes open, I'm sure it'll be really easy for me to make that move. And not only that. They gave me a raise because of it, you know what I mean? So that makes a huge difference there. They're saying that we can't put me in a position right now, but we recognize your accomplishment and here's something for it until we create a space.

We're very proud of what we accomplished. Since I finished, I actually approached my employer and told him, you know, I didn't take a course that really helps the business per se, but now I'm a college graduate and I think that should make a difference in how I'm compensated. I was able to discuss it with him and he agreed that it's going to change some things. In the future I may get a change in position, maybe they might want me to be a shop foreman or an assistant manager. But if that time comes and I need my degree I will have it and the same thing goes for my wife. My wife had a great career in Jamaica with the forestry division there. But she's trying to just improve herself to where she can enter the American workplace with a college degree rather than just, you know, coming here with her credentials from Jamaica that may or may not be recognized.

If somebody were not sure, I would ask them what they thought an education costs nowadays and how many companies out there are willing to go the extra mile and offer this to you—not only to you but to your family as well? That is super generous and I can't tell you how much money that has saved me to get into that program. And then once you're in it, if you get the right people around you, you'll have a success coach and if you listen to what they're telling you, you'll organize yourself.