

Research Interview Assessment #8

Date: October 27, 2023

Subject: Interview: Jigar Lakdawala

Assessment:

My interview with Mr. Lakdawala spanned about a half to three-fourths an hour. He is one of my family friends, so it was easier to speak to him even though it was in a different setting. He is an electrical engineer at the local Raytheon which is a large engineering company that produces military weapons to sell to the United States military. Becoming an employee in this company is very rigorous because they seek the brightest candidates, so they are viewed very highly. Being involved in federal affairs, these Raytheon employees along with Mr. Lakdawala cannot discuss or share their current products and projects. Still, I was able to learn more about the engineering career through him.

One big claim Mr. Lakdawala continues to make is to not restrict your engineering career from the get-go by doing aerospace engineering or similar ones. As I'd been researching and speaking to many people, they feel the same way but he was able to explain to me more as to why. The thing is, when studying mechanical or electrical engineering, one can do aerospace along with many other branches allowing oneself to not be limited in career options. This idea goes hand in hand with what I have learned about mechanical engineering being the broadest subject. The broadness of it is what allows the student to explore as many careers as possible with no obstacles. I'm glad I was verified of the right decision of doing mechanical engineering in this aspect since I had been debating it for several months at this point.

Mr. Lakdawala's career in the field was rooted in engineering from the very beginning. He had always been stronger in math and sciences not to mention many of his family members

are engineers. These two qualities are common for many engineers: interest in STEM and exposure to engineers in the family.

I then inquired as much as I could about his current job without breaking his silencing contract with Raytheon. Firstly, Mr. Lakdawala's favorite project in his years had been building a drone with a camera to be used for surveillance. He was most intrigued by this due to the chance to use the product he designed. That led us to talk about the different parts of engineering one could immerse themselves into. There is designing where one would create models of products digitally and then there's manufacturing where the engineers physically assemble the product. Mr. Lakdawala is more interested in manufacturing, but I found myself unsure which side I enjoy more. It also brought up the point that most engineers never actually get the chance to see their products flourish but when they do, it is beyond rewarding.

A statement Mr. Lakdawala made that resonated with me was that "defense always plays catchup with commerce". What he's saying is that defense companies take longer to create proper technologies for various reasons, whereas commerce for that tech is quick. That is why engineering in this particular field is quite timely with hard deadlines. When I asked his perspective on AI, he said that it is beneficial in the instance of finding real-time data which may be difficult to scavenge as a human. This viewpoint is moreover based on his job in weaponry services.

I had a lot to learn from Mr. Lakdawala and I truly enjoyed our time together. It was engaging- the perspective he has on engineering as a whole. Though he couldn't discuss too much about his current engineering job, I got a lot of valuable information related to an engineering lifestyle and job overview. I hope to continue to dig deeper into my specific topic of airplane and design in my next interview now that I have a good feel of the field as a whole.