



INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

- ENTERTAINMENT -



BENTON SHORTRIDGE

- B.S, Mechanical Engineering, 2019
- Position: Senior Manager, Attractions
- Company: Khatib and Alami

CONOR TRIPLETT

- MET, Master of Entertainment Technology, 2020
- Position: Associate Creative Producer
- Company: Universal Creative

BRADEN BARNETT

- M.S., Mechanical Engineering, 2023
- Position: Show Mechanical Engineering Intern
- Company: Walt Disney Imagineering

Tell Me About Your Job

Triplett: "Every day and every week is different. Building theme parks is interesting because it is a mix of the creative process and the construction process. Each of those processes has its own unique set of phases and challenges, so we are constantly trying to find smart ways to solve interdisciplinary problems. For my role, I am in meetings essentially all day jumping from problem to problem and connecting different team members and their vendors to get us to the finish line. I draw on a lot of my technical and design skills to ramp up on problems and then brainstorm solutions. Mostly, I use a lot of the soft skills (collaboration, communication, etc) to make sure folks get the information they need, but that is grounded in technical know-how."

How did your major or classes at CMU help prepare you for your job?

Shortridge: "Entertainment Technology classes that I took were directly related to the entertainment industry work that I have done. Mechanical Engineering classes taught me the critical thinking skills that I can apply to my job, even if I am more of a project manager now."

Triplett: "My grad school experience at the ETC prepared me for solving weird, interdisciplinary problems that require a best guess, not a straightforward answer. The ETC taught me how to push the boundaries to make cool things and not be afraid of the unknown."

What other activities, hobbies, or experiences helped to prepare you for a job in your industry?

Barnett: "A passion for entertainment and storytelling, tinkering."

Triplett: "I'm the guy at theme parks and movies peeking behind curtains and trying to pull things off the walls to see if they work. I love going to museums and shows and anything considered immersive or entertainment or just plain weird."

What classes would you recommend to a student who is interested in a job in your industry?

Shortridge: "Most classes at the entertainment technology center are very applicable to the entertainment industry, depending on what you want to get into. Additionally, any 3d modeling and calculation simulation programs are very useful if you want to go into ride or show design engineering."

What advice would you give to a student who is considering a career in your industry?

Barnett: "Like many industries, networking is the most crucial element of getting in. It's a relatively small industry, and everyone knows everyone. Look into attending IAAPA or joining the TEA. At CMU, definitely join TPEG."

Triplett: "Never be afraid to reach out and ask questions! People in our industry love to talk about the things we are excited about (aka our jobs), so never be afraid to reach out with specific questions."

What advice would you give to a student applying for an internship/job in your industry?

Barnett: "Disney and Universal are great, but they both contract out a lot of their work to vendors. Vendors are an amazing place to get hands-on experience. I got my start interning at Animax Designs in Nashville, a major animatronic vendor, and that's what eventually led me to work at Universal Creative, LAIKA, and Walt Disney Imagineering."

Shortridge: "If you are able, directly network with the people that will be able to give you an internship. The Entertainment industry is niche and largely built upon relationships."