Eleanor Cooper

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Describe your overall duties/ responsibilities as a Reliability Engineer:

As a Reliability Engineer at the world's largest winery, some of my main responsibilities are assessing criticality of equipment (to help prioritization of maintenance work), performing root cause analysis on repeat maintenance issues, performing failure mode & effects analysis on equipment, and ensuring our maintenance data is being reported in an accurate and useful way. My role is part of a new World Class Maintenance initiative which is transforming how we approach maintaining our assets. This provides a unique opportunity to teach the maintenance department best practices for installing and servicing equipment.

Explain the skills/abilities that are required for being successful in your role:

I joined this team after spending 5 years in the aerospace industry and entered into a brand-new role that was still being developed. While it was exciting to be part of, adaptability and willingness to learn and iterate were important skills because it was frustrating at times! My background of ISE and Lean Six Sigma helped immensely with defining and analyzing equipment downtime causes, but I am learning on the job about many reliability and maintainability tools and methodologies. Systematic problem solving and communication are keys to success. Because my role was new, I had to communicate more than I anticipated—I had to market myself as a reliability resource, explain what my role is, THEN get to the project talk.

What advice would you give to students who are considering majoring in Industrial and Systems Engineering?

One of the reasons I chose ISE was because I felt like it could be applied to many different industries. My advice would be go beyond the "Industrial Engineer" job search, or the "Lean/ Process Improvement" job search. While this may be a good way to enter the job market, I believe our skills are widely applicable, you just need to take the extra step to find those roles and showcase your skills. The key is being able to learn and problem solve in new settings, and to never stop learning! I think it is important to think of new jobs and projects like a new subject that you need to study and master.