



Profiles of Electrical Engineers and Computer Scientists



Carl Allison

**Senior Electronics Engineer
Walt Disney Imagineering
Glendale, CA**

Job Description:

Carl Allison is an Electrical Engineer who also writes software and works on network design. Through software design coding and testing he creates special effects for theme rides at Walt Disney World.

Advice to Students:

"Research the fields one is interested in ahead of time. If young engineers are not aware of what a particular area or discipline is all about, they might be getting into something that they may regret in the long run."

Video Transcript 1:

"And coming to work for Walt Disney Company, being that there are a lot of creative individuals here, a lot of artistic people, we have a concept called blue sky where you just start thinking and pulling ideas out of the clear blue sky. And that's kind of a nice thing to be told that, you know, go after something that is different, something that has not been done before. Go after the idea that makes people think, well, how did they do that? And as opposed to being conformed to certain defense or military standards where you're confined to a rigid box, we have standards here, but as far as the creative aspect, we're allowed to let our minds roam and find that one thing that no one has ever thought of before."

Video Transcript 2:

"We did a project in Florida several years ago and I worked on a small piece of that - it was the Tower of Terror. And I had to do some software design and software coding and testing, to bring off one of the special effects for something that was considered in the fifth dimension. More or less, it was a giant eyeball, because it was themed after Rod Sterling's Twilight Zone. So it was this giant eyeball that allows the guest to have an experience within the attraction. The giant eyeball opens up and there are images plastered on this eyeball as it looks around and observes what's going on. The guest is now part of that experience. And so I got a chance to work on some of that software for that particular special effect."

Interview:

Carl Allison of Walt Disney Imagineering works hard and loves it. "At Imagineering, we make the magic for all of the Disney theme parks, so one would say that it is kind of a magical experience. But I think probably the best part about working for Imagineering is knowing that [through] what you're creating. . . , you have the opportunity to make a lot of people smile and enjoy themselves."

Allison believes that hard work is key to getting a position at Imagineering. "When I was in my previous job, I continually took continuing education courses, professional courses. And I listed them on my resume. . . . And when the people who were looking at my resume saw the various different skills that I had or courses that I had taken, they thought this was a good mix." But the hard work and study never stop. "I think one of the most important things is to always strive to be on the cutting edge. . . .I've been out of school twelve years now. I carry a good collection of technical reference manuals back and forth from home to work, so I can always stay up on the latest and greatest for either software or something in electronics because you're always challenged here at Disney."

According to Allison, hard work pays off in other ways. "In my career, I've not had a problem with any race issue. . .that would hold me back partly because of my personality. I'm a Type A personality. I'm always on the edge. I've always tried to make sure that I excel at whatever I do." He continues, "In my particular case, if there were any race issues, either I was blind to them or I just ignored anything that came up. . . . I was always told. . . when I was growing up to ignore those types of things because they can only make you angry. So race has never really been something that I've been concerned with because I know what I can do, and I know how well I can do it. So I let my job skills speak for themselves." The confidence that work and preparation give is invaluable.

Allison advises students to take the same approach when preparing for an engineering career. He believes that it is essential to research the fields one is interested in ahead of time. "If young engineers are not aware of what a particular area or discipline is all about, they might be getting into something that they may regret in the long run."

Furthermore, he strongly recommends that students follow a strategy that worked well for him in getting his first position. "There were several companies that I was interested in getting a possible interview with. . . . And so I studied what the companies did. I said, `Well, I want to find out exactly what it is that they do what their product is so that I'm up on it, so that, when I'm in this interview session, I can answer the questions intelligently.'" Showing serious interest in a company is a good way for a student to make a strong impression because, at that point, there's no past experience, necessarily, from a previous job.

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