

PENNENGINEERING® EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT SERIES

HOW I THINK INSIDE THE BOX™

An interview with Dustin Hallenbeck, Senior Field Application Engineer – San Jose, CA

What inspired your career path?

With both of my parents in the military, I spent the majority of my childhood on Air Force bases and had the privilege of being exposed to many engineering marvels and military planes up close – which fostered my interest in engineering and motivated me to start my own company in college. I designed a motorcycle safety product, developed prototypes, filed for patents, and secured investors. It was the perfect gateway to a career in engineering.

Tell us about the services provided by you and your team?

As part of the Application Engineering team, I oversee all application engineering work for our SSR (Server, Switch and Router) markets in the U.S. I manage a core team of engineers here in the San Jose, CA area that works closely with many of world's top OEMs in the datacom/telecom space. Every day brings us exciting customer challenges, whether it's conducting performance validation on a current product or designing a new highly customized solution for a special application.

What's the biggest challenge the fastening industry currently faces?

For some customers, deciding which fasteners to use in their products is not necessarily a priority. They're more focused on material purchasing or circuit board development – things that are more complex in nature than perhaps the fastener itself. What that means is by the time the fasteners are considered, the product may already be designed. That can make it challenging for the customer to find a suitable fastening solution – but it gives our application engineering team the opportunity to create a unique solution.

However, it's always best to collaborate directly and early on with customers whenever possible. Our field team has achieved tremendous successes when we can sit down with customers and innovate together.

For example, a critical issue faced by one of our customers turned into a big win thanks to fast, face-to-face collaboration. When a contract manufacturer installed the wrong fastener in a server chassis, the customer risked losing 300 servers due to the error. Within just 30 minutes of meeting with the customer, our team was able to develop a solution to press out the wrong fastener and install an alternative fastener. After testing the prototype, securing part stock, and overseeing the second install, we saved the customer's original production after a week, no longer putting the original 300 servers in risk of being returned by the end user.

How do you stay innovative?

For me, the secret is to always ask questions of yourself, your colleagues, and your customers. The result of asking WHY is that you'll always learn something new – and open up opportunities for innovation. It's what makes PennEngineering® such a strong partner. We're always asking, learning, and exploring what's possible.

What excites you most about the future of fastening solutions?

The datacom/telecom industry is under constant pressure to fit more technology into smaller spaces. Products are always evolving and adapting, which inspires our team to design new fastening solutions that push the limits of what our customers are trying to do. Highly engineered fastening solutions are in demand, and here to stay.



Dustin Hallenbeck
Senior Field Application
Engineer – PEM®

You could say engineering is in Dustin Hallenbeck's DNA. His grandfather was a network engineer, and Dustin enjoyed spending time in his younger years building and playing with Tesla Coils and other engineering gadgets.

His parents' long-standing careers in the Air Force also inspired his engineering career path.