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Employment: Information Technology

Where I work

Engineer sees few 'typical' days at firm

06/08/2003

Name: Danielle Perry

Age: 29

Company: Photodigm Inc.

Location: Richardson

Title: System integration engineer

Job description: "I design, integrate, automate and data-log testing stations for edge and surface emitting lasers."

My typical day: "I don't know that I've had a 'typical' day. I spent many months designing, buying, assembling and trouble-shooting different test stations. I coordinate the device testing but try to do a majority of the testing myself. Now that all the systems are running, I'll start redesign of some fixtures or optical assemblies to make them more efficient. I am now adding data analysis features to the automation code."

What drew me here: "I had interviewed at a company in Arizona while living in California, and they called one of my references, Dr. Gary Evans. Dr. Evans was my professor in graduate school at Southern Methodist University, and he had co-founded a start-up in 2000 called Photodigm."

"Photodigm makes lasers for telecommunications and was then located on the SMU campus. The company was interviewing for engineering positions, and he asked if I would like to come back to Texas. I interviewed and attended the first company Christmas party on the same day (always a good sign) and moved back to Texas two weeks later."



MILTON HINNANT/DMN

Danielle Perry says she enjoys the "casual atmosphere" at Photodigm, a start-up founded by one of her SMU professors.



Where I fit on the ladder: "It's a small ladder (19 employees). I am a staff engineer, so this is pretty bottom rung. I have a lab, and manage the equipment and coordinate device testing."

How I am compensated: "As with most start-ups, my salary is fairly competitive, and I've been granted stock options. More importantly, I do not punch a clock, and I work in a casual atmosphere."

What I wear to work: "Oh, I think I push the envelope of business-casual. I usually wear jeans, and I have some Teva flip-flops, which I call my 'work shoes' (I keep a pair of dress shoes under my desk – just in case)."

Advice to someone who wants to enter my field: "Stay in graduate school! Now is a terrible time to enter the telecom industry, and I don't expect this to change any time soon. You need experience."

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