

Only the Best: Manufacturing Operator

Gage Products Company employee shares advice on working in field

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In a world where more companies are becoming committed to environmental safety, Gage Products Company, a Ferndale-based supplier of chemical-related products and processes, is a worldwide leader.

The company, a global recycler of solvents and chemicals utilizing environmentally friendly recycling processes, has earned recognition through numerous environmental, innovation, quality and supplier performance awards.

For the past five years, Tomas Cuevas has been on Gage's "front lines," working on a daily basis to help the company achieve its mission to deliver innovation while keeping care of natural resources and the planet in mind.

Cuevas, 58, is a manufacturing operator who prepares stainless steel containers for packaging of high-purity organic solvents. Among his responsibilities are receiving empty tote tanks, cleaning the tanks, and refilling them with solvents – all while ensuring environmental issues are managed according to the company's and its clients' policies.

"For Gage Products Company, conducting business in a

socially responsible manner is the only way to conduct business. Tomas works diligently and goes the extra mile every day to ensure that our customers are satisfied when they receive our products," says Andy Welch, business manager for Gage.

Career Insight

Cuevas offers insight for those who might be considering a career in his chosen field:

Q.: What jobs did you have before that prepared you for this one?

A.: I worked as a wastewater operator for a large steel company prior to coming to Gage Products.

My first job at Gage was working in the solvents recycling department. I learned how to safely handle hazardous solvent waste and recycle it back to original specifications to meet our customers' quality expectations.

Q.: What are the most important skills you need to be successful at your job?

A.: I need to have knowledge of all the tank receiving, cleaning and filling processes. In addition, I need to know how the quality of my work will affect downstream processes. Knowledge in how to safely handle hazardous materials is essential.



As a manufacturing operator with Gage Products Company in Ferndale, Tomas Cuevas, right, is responsible for preparing stainless steel containers that contain high-purity organic solvents and ensuring all methods meet the company's and clients' environmental standards.

Q.: What are some things people might be surprised to hear about your job?

A.: The processes for receiving, cleaning and filling tote tanks are ideally handled by a two-person team. Occasion-

ally, I have to handle all of these processes by myself, for example, if someone else is on vacation. While this slows the process down a bit, our standardized work instructions allow us to complete the

work safely and in a thorough manner.

Q.: What's your favorite part of your job?

A.: Working as a team – good teamwork makes any job easier.

Good to Know

■ Earnings in the chemical industry are higher than average, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Weekly earnings for all production workers in chemical manufacturing averaged \$809 in 2008, compared with \$724 for workers in all manufacturing industries.

■ Individuals seeking employment in the industry are expected to face keen competition, according to the bureau. Opportunities will be best for those with experience and continuing education.

■ Gage Products Company currently is accepting résumés via the "Contact Us" link at www.gageproducts.com.

Q.: Why would you recommend this career to others?

A.: This career is rewarding because the work is steady, although demanding. Working for a company with high-quality standards means that you have to show up and give your best every day.

At the end of the day, I can go home knowing that I worked hard to deliver a high-quality product for our customers, and that they, in return, will continue to reward us with business that will keep me and my colleagues working.

WHAT PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES MUST KNOW

Think a career in the chemical manufacturing and engineering industry might be for you? Andy Welch, business manager for Gage Products Company, a supplier of chemical-related products and processes with a commitment

to environmental and corporate social responsibility, says the company looks for these qualities in job candidates:

- The willingness to be flexible in approach and application, and the ability to be creative

and work to continuously improve.

- Desire to be part of a team. "Our culture is one where people are accountable to their objectives, and to each other, because they want to be," he says.

- A positive attitude, willingness to work hard and to be able to manage a complex and demanding workflow.
- Willing to take risks for the sake of continuous improvement. "Being flexible when responding

to customer demands and emergencies is essential, but equally important is providing the foresight to assist in the customer's business planning and avoid any surprises or detrimental effects," he says.