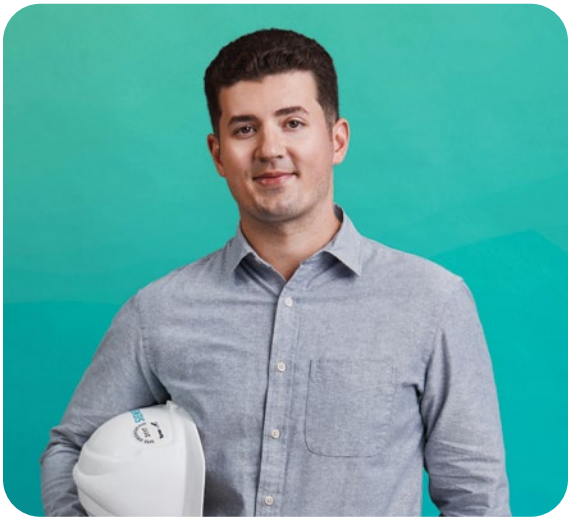
AIST Young Professionals

Roland Najbar

Business Development Cranes
Siemens Industry Inc.



What first interested you about learning more about the steel industry?

Shortly before college graduation, I applied for an industrial crane application engineering role at Siemens Industry, and much to my delight, I got the role. I was immediately exposed to a number of different industries, basically every industry where you would find an industrial crane. But I will never forget the first time I got to commission a crane in a steel mill. Before that, I hardly knew anything about the steelmaking process. There was something about seeing and feeling a charge drop into an electric arc furnace that made me realize how amazing the steel industry is, and this fueled me to learn everything I could about the entire process.

Describe the coursework and degrees that you have obtained.

I obtained a B.S. degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Illinois Chicago in May 2017. My coursework mainly consisted of mathematics, physics and computer science, as well as supplementary electrical engineering courses. Coincidentally after graduation, the job I started was in an electrical engineering capacity, which I preferred. But having mechanical and electrical engineering knowledge helped me excel in understanding mechatronic machines such as cranes and steelmaking equipment.

Have any AIST programs assisted with your career advancement?

Without a doubt. One of the largest obstacles that AIST has helped me overcome is public speaking. I've worked my way up from speaking at smaller Technology Committee meetings to speaking in front of hundreds of members, coworkers and customers. This skill was transferable and extremely helpful with the advancement of my career.

What has been the biggest benefit you've experienced being involved in AIST as a Young Professional?

Being a part of AIST as a Young Professional comes with countless benefits and has enabled me to grow within my career. When I joined the industry I was fresh out of college, so networking and getting to know seasoned professionals helped me advance at a much faster pace. Also, being around a group of people with similar interests puts you in the position where you're able to ask questions from people in various backgrounds and roles, which helps you understand the industry as a whole.

Besides networking, AIST also offers professional development opportunities via technical resources, publications, conferences and training programs, which help you stay up to date on the latest developments, making you more competitive and valuable in your career. I believe continuous learning is very important in a technology-fueled dynamic industry.

Finally, AIST provides opportunities for leadership and advocacy. By actively participating in committees, you are able to contribute by shaping industry standards regarding safety and technology. By advocating for changes that will improve

the lives of those working in iron and steel you're making a tangible impact.

Have you had any mentors that have assisted with your career development so far? If so, how did you identify them as a mentor, and what impact have they made thus far?

Mentors have played a crucial role in my career development. I've been lucky enough to have a number of mentors who have all played different roles in my career development. For example, I've had mentors who helped me grow my technical skills by knowledge transfer and sharing experiences. I have mentors who offer perspective and encouragement and act as role models. I have mentors who challenge my abilities to take me out of my comfort zone and advocate for my success. There is something to learn from every experience, whether good or bad, and having people you can rely on promotes achieving personal and professional fulfillment.

When it comes to identifying mentors, I start by setting clear goals for myself and then identify mentors who can provide relevant expertise and insight along the way. I'm lucky enough to work at a company where there are plenty of talented individuals who are willing to support me. Additionally, I have mentors who are customers and AIST members. In general, you have to take the initiative to reach out to potential mentors. Most importantly, trust your instincts and don't forget that mentoring goes both ways, which is why the Young Professionals Committee is important to me. Being able to mentor the next generation is essential to the longevity and success of this industry.

What advice do you have for students who are curious about pursuing something related to the steel industry?

I would advise students to take the time to research the industry. There are so many opportunities in iron and steel that as a student I had no idea about. There are various different roles such as manufacturing, production, research and engineering, so you're sure to find one that matches your skillset.

Find mentors who can guide you and let you know of open positions. Join associations such as AIST that can get you real-world experience where you can join local chapters and tour plants. Don't be afraid to get out of your comfort zone and ask questions. No one starts out by knowing all there is to know.

Finally, one of my biggest pieces of advice is you have to put in the work. Develop relevant and transferable skills, seek internships or co-ops, embrace a learning mindset, and network. All of that will pay dividends in your career.

One of my favorite facts is that steel is infinitely recyclable, so it's a sustainable industry to pursue a career in.

What do you find unique and interesting about the steel industry? What do you enjoy the most about it?

Admittedly, when I first came out of college, I had no idea the profound impact steel played on global economies. Steel is fundamental and is used in so many applications that it is indispensable in virtually every aspect of modern life. What's even more fascinating to me is the level of collaboration between people of various disciplines that all play a vital role in production, design and utilization of steel products. As an engineer, I'm always impressed with how dynamic and ever-evolving the industry is, and how much of an impact technological advancement plays. What I've enjoyed most about working with the steel industry is that it always feels rewarding. Initiatives you take today will impact future generations. ✦