Career Counseling and Support Services Bucks Go Pro intern Tae Young Kim recently sat down with Steve Carvati, director of consumer products at Worthington Cylinders and former student athlete for the Ohio State Baseball team.

Informational Interview:
Steve Carvati, Worthington Industries
Bachelor of Science in Childhood Psychology, 2005
Title: Director of Consumer Products within Worthington Cylinders, (One of four main divisions within Worthington Cylinders)

Why this Career path? It was interesting. I wanted to become a professional baseball player. That was my goal. The expectation was that I’d start off at the minor leagues and work my way up. When I had my arm surgeries and, more importantly, when draft day came, I didn’t get drafted my junior year. It made me take a step back and realize “what am I going to do with my life?” Worthington Industries was put on my radar by Larry Romanoff as well as Ike Kelley, so I knew I had an alternative plan outside of baseball. When the major leagues didn’t come to fruition, I ended up meeting with Worthington Industries and learned a lot about the company through the website and the different people I talked to. I came, I interviewed and I had the job. When I started I was told that “Once you get in at Worthington, you don’t really go anywhere else. That’s going be your career path for the rest of your life unless you decide to make a switch on your own.” I haven’t regretted it since.

How does Psychology relate to your career? It relates more now than it did my previous positions because I have six people reporting to me, all with six different attitudes and characteristics. Managing each person differently ties in with the psychology background because you have to get to know your employees. That’s not only at work, but outside of work; what they like to do, and their family. When difficult conversations come up you can go back in time and see how was their upbringing, what did they do to get here, how does their professional life relate to their personal life and things like that. I think it’s played a huge part in just managing people overall.

What is a typical day like? We start work at eight so I’m usually in there early to get emails done and set the day before I start getting busy. From eight to five is a combination of a lot of things: dealing with customers that are upset about certain things that want to go above the national account managers, so they’ll go to me; managing supply chain at the plant with orders if there’s a question on who gets prioritization; and being in meetings with my employees talking about strategic plans, what’s going on for the day, the week, and the month. Then I’m pulled into marketing meetings, supply chain meetings, sometimes operations meetings. I’m in meetings all day through various departments in the company.

What is the most satisfying part of your career? For me it’s the people I work with. Having a sports background you’re so used to having that locker room attitude and the comradery. I’m lucky with the group that I have under me; we are all on the same page; we all have fun. We are probably the most fun out of all the business units in the cylinders department. We joke around a lot but just like in sports when it comes time to get stuff done we get stuff done.

What personal qualities are most helpful in your work? Responsiveness for me is one of the top ones. I always tell my guys if you don’t know the answer just let the customer or myself know that you’re on top of it. There’s nothing worse in the work environment than waiting on an answer from somebody that you don’t hear back from whether it’s a day, weeks, or however long because they have a job they’re trying to do as well and if they don’t have an answer for what they need in a timely manner then it’s not good for that company. It’s also just being outgoing and being who you are. There are a lot of people who don’t stay true to themselves; they try to play the political game spending the majority of their time in
areas of the business that they shouldn’t be in for various reasons. With me it’s always been taking care of my team first and foremost. Offering support wherever and whenever they need it.

What surprises you most about your career? That I was done with baseball. I thought for sure that was it and then I get into Worthington and I still had the itch when I first started out like, “Hey I kind of miss it”. But then you realize that it’s just a new challenge in life. So as baseball was just a path I was going to go down, then transitioning to the work life showed me the opportunities within Worthington Industries and professional life. It’s just a new goal. You just change your mindset from sports to professional and try to advance as far as you can while staying true to yourself and having fun.

What advice do you have for people interested in your career? If you like being competitive and enjoy a team atmosphere then sales for me is a no brainer. I’ve worked for different cross-functional departments within Worthington and I think by far sales has the best opportunity to use your outgoing personality and confidence while staying humble. I think for these reasons, sales is the number one path. If you’re competitive like I talked about, enjoy traveling and being around everybody, then sales is the way to go.

If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? What would you change? I don’t think I would change much of anything because I don’t really know anything else. Maybe I guess I’d be curious to find out what other divisions within Worthington are like. For me it’s always been baseball then I transitioned into Worthington cylinders where I was inside sales, outside sales, national account manager, and then director. I was always in sales. Do I look back and say, “What if I went into operations or a different functional department within Worthington?” I like to say no because I’m so happy with where I’m at but that’s also because that’s all I know. I’d be curious to see how my skill set would transition into a different field of expertise within Worthington but for me right now I don’t have any gripes or look back and say “I wish I would’ve done this” because I’ve been very happy with the directions I’ve taken.

How did you transfer your skills from athletics to your professional career? I always had an outgoing personality and I felt like I was very effective in my communication when I got elected captain my junior and senior year. You don’t realize it beforehand that you’re an effective communicator and a leader until you get rewarded for it. Then you look back and say, “I obviously must be doing something right, so what has that been?” You take a look back at that point in time to everything you’ve done whether its on the field or off the field and you take a look back at your strongest skillsets and say, “that’s what helped me get to where I am now. And now I’m going to take those and build upon that.” It also gives you a chance to take a look at your weaknesses and build a personality portfolio of who you are, how you can effectively communicate and how you can always get better.

What are the problems you see working in this field? Sometimes I’m almost too candid. I have a lot of fun and guys have a lot of fun with me but sometimes it goes back to knowing who you’re managing. You can connect one way toward one guy and if that transitions to another person, they might not take it the same way. Being cognizant of the audience you’re talking to is a challenge but it’s not much of a challenge now as it was for me when I first started because I didn’t really know all the guys I was working with or their personalities.

What is the training required for your career? For me it was nothing. I got hired in sales, I was on a two week training program and all they essentially showed me was here’s how you enter an order in the system, here’s what you say when you answer a phone call and here are the territories you’re going to manage for the territory manager. That was literally it; but it’s a lot different now then what it was for me. After those two weeks, I was essentially put on the desk by myself and I would answer phone calls and learn as you go and jump in at once. When I became a territory manager, I flew to Boston, got my car, drove down to New York City and started calling all the accounts there. It was that quick. There was no training whatsoever. But now they have about a three month training program for new hires where you get implemented with the system and then integrated with the products that you will be selling. You’re then integrated with the account representative you’re going to be working with, so it’s a three month process.