

# the PodCAST TDEISS

📅 Wed, Feb 11, 2026 12:31PM 🕒 21:38

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

ISU, technology education, Troy Dice, Morton Industries, Vice President of Operations, career transition, goal setting, leadership style, self-awareness, operational constraints, training development, high school teacher, competitive nature, prioritizing tasks, team building.

## SPEAKERS

Kara Snyder, Troy Deiss

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### Kara Snyder 00:03

Kara, hello and welcome to the podcast, a podcast produced by the College of Applied Science and Technology at Illinois State University. I'm your host, Kara Snyder, and I serve as the assistant dean of marketing communications and constituent relations for the College. Each episode, we're sitting down with an alum of the college, and today we have a chance to talk to Troy dice. Troy is an alum of the Department of Technology and currently serves as the Vice President of Operations for Morton industries. Welcome and thank you for being here. Thanks for having me. Well, let's start at the beginning. Could you tell us how you chose ISU.

### Troy Deiss 00:39

Yeah well, I think a lot of it for me was proximity to my hometown, which I'm from, the around the Peoria area. So my background is a little bit different in the fact that I raced motorcycles professionally and needed to kind of be home on the weekends. So being that short 40 minutes, 45 minutes away, it just made sense for me to stay local. And also knowing what I wanted to major in I knew that ISU had a great technology education program just from the research I had done through high school and in my undergraduate degree or my Associate's degree. So just kind of was trying to set myself up for success when I left ISU as well.

### Kara Snyder 01:16

So I was curious about that. How did you find your major? Was this something you were passionate about as a high school student? Or did you have someone guide you towards that walk us through what that looked like?

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Troy Deiss 01:28

Yeah, absolutely, I would say I had a really great high school teacher. Name is Mr. Randall. He was a welding teacher. Kind of sparked my interest in welding, and that really led to just, how do I make a career of this? And so I actually went and welded in industry for a while. Right out of high school, decided that I wanted to kind of transition that into more professional side of things, rather than on the shop floor. So right out of that position, I started going to college, at a community college, and then not really understanding how that would fit into a career. When I did that again, when I was researching, kind of, what do I do with this information? What do I do with the knowledge I have? Kind of came across where technology education, and not only welding, but welding and machining and woods, electricity, electronics, and all the things that anything hands on, I was really bad about and so never even thought about being a teacher in the past, it wasn't even, wasn't one of those things where your your parents ask you, what do you want to be? And you grew up. I can tell you that it never was. I never said education, but when I started kind of going down that path, I really, really enjoyed it. And again, I think I just had a really good mentor, really good teacher in high school, and kind of put me in that, in that direction of this, this could be kind of something kind of fun,

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Kara Snyder 02:47

and when you think back about that and finding your major and finding this fit of being an educator that you didn't see coming, what do you miss the most about that time in your life and your time on campus as a red Bird?

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Troy Deiss 03:00

Yeah I mean, I think the technology education group at ISU is we were really tight knit. And I think, you know, the individuals, I still talk to some of them, but just that time of kind of camaraderie, I guess was a really good in the group. I was also part of the at that time. I believe it's called something different. Now maybe it's not a technology education collegiate Association. I was part of that, and we did some trips and competed. One of the best trips that went on there was went to Albuquerque for competition. So I'd say just the group I was with was a really good group of people, and a lot of them still in education today. And talk to talk to quite a few still.

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Kara Snyder 03:39

So I know you majored in technology and engineering education, and you started your career as a high school teacher, but I also know that I introduced you as the Vice President of Operations, so walk us through your transition to private industry. What was that like for you?

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Troy Deiss 03:56

Yeah, so for me, I taught in a high school level. I taught at local high school, and during that time, I actually started my master's in at ISU. And so started there, really focusing on training, development people, and received my master's in that year because I had some relationships with local HR individuals, because I used to place students with industry, I reached out to one I thought a lot about, and thought a lot a lot of him, and asked if they had any opportunity just to come on as a trainer, and so that could have been as a consultant or full time, and just was looking to kind of branch out from from education. So I had some conversations that turned into job offer, and that was at Morton industries as a trainer. I did that for two years after seven years of education. Actually went back to education for three years after there was some change in hands, and then at Morton industries during that time, and we were purchased by a larger corporate for. Firm that didn't really see the same forward thinking that I had in mind for department that I was in. So went back to education, and then the owner of more industries now, when he purchased it, he asked me to come back in a training role again and aligning their new human resources system with training and really just getting building a staff up that we could kind of be the premium manufacturer with the best training program that we could find. So came back 2017 as a training manager, transitioned into HR manager, and then did that took about two years, and then I was three years HR manager, and then a couple years ago, they asked me to lead the operations team for one of our plants that was, this is the one here in Morton. We have two in Morton, I was asked to lead one of them. So I started leading the we called the North plant. And then after a year, they asked me to lead the south plant as well. And then as of recently, they've asked me to lead the Texas facility as well. So and that's when I got the honor to kind of move into the vice president role aligning the operations teams.

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Kara Snyder 06:13

So we have listeners of this podcast from all across the college and the university. How would you describe your job to someone outside of the industry. Is there such a thing as a typical day for you? What does your work look like?

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Troy Deiss 06:28

Yeah, it's a typical day. Is definitely not often. So the nice thing about operations is very fast paced. And so I'd say my day is very, very fast paced. And really it focuses around, you know, how to run the plants most efficiently, how to align our processes at different layers of the business, how to do things cost effectively, and setting strategic goals for what, really what I do is goals for the year, goals for the quarter, goals for the month, and then the week, and then the day, and so making sure that everybody is aligned and and has one common goal in mind. We're all rowing in the same direction, and that's it's really just being the executive sponsor for all that leadership.

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Kara Snyder 07:06

So do you say, would you say that you have a favorite part of your job?

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Troy Deiss 07:10

I think probably I would say the goal setting and how to help make things run more efficiently. Those are things that always kind of spark my interest. I'm a very competitive person, and I always feel like most individuals kind of in the world have a little bit of a competitive nature to them, if not a lot. And so I'd say I love to set a goal that's a stretch goal, and celebrate in those wins when we when we kind of come to a conclusion with them. So yeah, I would say just overall work with the individuals I do. I love that part of my job, but then setting the goals and getting and really reaching those things that are feel like they're a little bit far out of reach.

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Kara Snyder 07:47

So I would be curious, if you enjoy goal setting so much, do you have any advice for either our students or our young alumni that are entering into their careers and trying to get a handle on prioritizing and that sort of thing. Are there any tips you have in relation to goal setting that they might be able to adapt and take with them?

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Troy Deiss 08:08

Yeah, that's a great question. I think, really, my thoughts on kind of how to prioritize your day is, if everything's a priority, nothing's a priority. So you have to decide every single day what's the most important thing to get done today, because you're not going to you're not going to get it all done. You if you do, then you're a phenomenon. And doesn't mean it's going to happen every day, but it happened today. So celebrate that. But I'd say again, prioritize what's important today. Really focus on driving that to completion. And then, you know, if you get get that done in one day, you start on the next priority. And so I think at some point we've all probably had an experience with a checklist or on you do list, as they say, then, you know, we sometimes that can be so broad where we don't really know where to start. All I can say is, pick a spot that doesn't need to be perfect and move forward and drive it to completion. I always use the analogy with my team and my staff is that we, you know, every day we need to build a house, we have to finish it with trim. So there's a lot to do and but it's not done until the trim is on, it's complete, then we can actually move on. And I'm not saying that we can't be doing this in tandem. So you have multiple projects moving at one time, I mean, but that's what our our staff is for. That's what our team is for. So we can all again, row in the same direction, but have very distinct priorities throughout the day, and finishing those priorities as we see fit.

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Kara Snyder 09:26

That's great advice. Thank you. And on the flip side, I also like to ask people, What do you consider to be the most challenging part of your job?

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Troy Deiss 09:36

Yeah, I mean, every day, you know, strikes as different challenges. I would say, probably the biggest challenge in operations, and that we see every day, is identifying constraints, because the constraint changes every single day, identifying certain constraints within the facility. So Morton industries, we are a tubing manufacturer, so we've been tubing one of the largest we're one of the largest tube vendors in the United States. States. And so when we think about processes from the beginning to the end, we cut steel, we bend steel, we weld steel, and this is very high level, we paint steel, and then we ship it right. And so in every day, different departments in different areas have different constraints. And so that's probably the most difficult part of my position, is focusing on, again, trying to prioritize, what is the constraint today? How do we how do we tackle that constraint? But it is also a part that I really enjoy as well. So that's that's about it. I think for those of you that are readers, a really good book that helped me in operations is called the goal. That is a phenomenal book, all about manufacturing, and when I first got in operations, that book will explain better than I could ever explain the theory of constraints, and it's very difficult for a lot of manufacturing leaders to tackle, and that book's helped me tremendously, kind of moving into the role that I'm in.

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Kara Snyder 10:54

I always love a good book recommendation from our alumni, so thank you. We'll have to add that to our reading list, yeah, absolutely. So I'm curious, in this role as Vice President of Operations, how would you describe your leadership style, and my follow up question for you to that is going to be, have you been able to see your leadership style evolve as your career has progressed?

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Troy Deiss 11:18

Yeah, I think it's absolutely evolved. I think, you know, at the beginning of when you're first a leader, and you're first, you know, given your task to run a team or even even have an individual report to you. And the same thing goes for education. I think when I've taught, and for 10 years, I taught for 10 years total time, then from the time that I began teaching at the time my 10th year teaching. You know, my style had changed tremendously as well. But, yeah, I think it's evolved more the fact that I would say, I'm trying to word this correctly, but I was definitely more, I'm still goal driven, but I was goal driven before, where, in the past, I didn't care what was in my way. You know, a lot of I would say, not ruined, but it definitely was challenging for people to work with me at times, because, again, I had a goal in mind, and I would just be a pile driver and get and get it to the finish line, regardless of what or who was in the way, not necessarily what I would recommend for anybody that was kind of when I was, you know, 10 years younger, that's you didn't see those things. I think it evolved really, really quickly for me into my leadership styles. Is building a relationship with my team, building trust within the team, so they know that you can trust them. They can trust you, and we're going to make the right decisions for the company at all times they're in understanding people, I would say was, is a big part of my leadership style. Now, I mean, one of the things that I refer to is always, you know, there's two types of people in the world, one that immediately trusts when they meet, and so they meet you, they trust you, and they trust you until that trust is broken. And then there's another type of person in the world that and this is much like myself, and I'm very self aware this is the fact that you don't trust until they build it right. And so neither right, neither wrong. To be a leader, you need to understand the personalities of everybody within your team. So there's, there's plenty of tools to do that now. There's plenty of like opportunities to take, like the DiSC Profile assessment and things like that that can help a leader really understand their team, so then they can understand what drives them and what moves them to the finish line. Because I have a great team. I have, I would, I would say the best team of anybody, any of my my friends or colleagues that I meet, a really great team that will do a lot but do a lot for the company. But we all have different personalities, and learning those as a leader is going to be is very important to the success of your group,

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Kara Snyder 13:45

for sure. So what I love about your answer is I am hearing that it is just packed with self awareness. You know, you've clearly done a lot of reflection, thought about your strengths and possibly your areas for opportunity and improvement, looking back over the course of your career. Do you have additional advice for students that might be seeking those self reflection opportunities? How is that something that you can be aware of from the get go as you start your career?

T Troy Deiss 14:16

Yeah, I think keeping the blinders down is huge, right? It's hard for all of us to just to understand, even ourselves, let alone other people. And so, yeah, I think any opportunity you get to, you know, if there's a seminar or a podcast or something, you can listen in on our read a book, and so some self awareness books, or, in my opinion, some of the best things, but then learning how to read people is huge, and having the self awareness of like when maybe you have crossed a line, or maybe when you shouldn't have said something that you said, or just understanding that so you can immediately remedy and say, you know, because they perception is reality, maybe they perceive something wrong to really quickly turn around and be able to. To again, keep the trust and build the trust so they know that you're you know you're all having the same, same values in mind, but yeah, any opportunity somebody gets to take an assessment or do a reflection, I think, is huge, because the more you can know about yourself, the easier it is to understand other people

K Kara Snyder 15:17

absolutely well. Troy, we are going to finish with a speed route. So I'm going to ask you to just go with your first instinct on these questions. We're just going to learn a little bit more about you.

T Troy Deiss 15:26

Okay, it makes me a little nervous but, its going to be fun.

K Kara Snyder 15:32

Tell us about your morning routine.

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Troy Deiss 15:34

Well, that depends on the day, and so my weekend morning routines are much different than my weekday morning routines. Weekday I'm up early. It's kind of a requirement of the position that I'm in. We start, you know, we run all three shifts, so we try to get here as early as I can. And I'm up and at them. I don't even leave the room until I'm showered and ready to go. A lot of people walk out and they get coffee. And I'm all business during the week, it's, it's, get up, get moving, then I grab my coffee, leave the door. I'm out the door, and like usually, between 17 and 20 minutes, I can get pretty quick. But also I have the luxury of being a male, and I can just do my hair really quickly. You know, it's it can be different across the board for different sexes, for sure. And then the weekends, I'm a little bit different. I get up and I'm always kind of lounging around for a little bit, so I'm still an early riser, but I do enjoy the coffee and quiet. Usually light a fire in the morning in my house and just kind of hang out. It's a good opportunity again for just for some relaxation. And then I always hit the gym, and so at the gym throughout the week, but not in the mornings, but in the weekends. I'm I always try to go in the mornings and just start the day off. Kind of a positive note there.

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Kara Snyder 16:44

What is your favorite day of the week?

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Troy Deiss 16:48

Oh, I mean, I think everybody loves Fridays, right? I mean, Fridays, you're coming to a close of the week and you're preparing for the weekend and spending some time with family. So I would say Fridays. I also like Wednesdays. And I might be weird, but I do. I do like the good old hump day. All right, to get you know, you know you're on the downhill run. So I like both days, but I would say Friday would be first and and Wednesday's a close second.

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Kara Snyder 17:08

See, that's why I like to ask, because you just never know exactly. What is your go to. Easy dinner.

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Troy Deiss 17:16

Tacos. Super easy, super quick. I always have ground beef or ground deer or something. I can, I can cook pretty quickly, especially for tacos. Spaghetti used to be kind of a go to I love cooking, but when I'm in a hurry, those two things are critical. In my opinion. Have those? Always have those in your house? Taco seasoning, some tortillas, some cheese. You can, you can make me a lot

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Kara Snyder 17:36

of it real quick. And they're crowd pleasers, for sure, absolutely.

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Troy Deiss 17:40

Yeah, my kids love them. Everybody loves them, right? So everybody loves a quick taco, for sure, especially when we're racing off to sports and everything else.

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Kara Snyder 17:48

Absolutely, what are you reading or listening to right now? Anything we should add to our reading list or our podcast queue?

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Troy Deiss 17:56

So reading right now, I just finished up. I'm not gonna cuss on air here, but the subtle art of not giving an F, right? So if you've never read that before, it's a I enjoyed that book mentally. I think we all can focus, sometimes getting worried about the wrong things and overwhelming our lives with things that we shouldn't be overwhelmed with. And that book helps you kind of prioritize. You know, what is it? What are the things that are worth your time, and what are the things not and so I really like that book.

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Kara Snyder 18:27

That's a great recommendation, and I appreciate the self editing. So thank you. What's the best concert you've ever been to?

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Troy Deiss 18:38

That's a tough one. I think first concert I ever went to is Incubus. They were really good. And it just maybe that's just stands out to me. Tyler Schindler's was good. Cody Johnson was really good as well, and so is Harvey. So I've seen all of them. My daughter is a huge concert goer, so we try to go to quite a few a year. I'm excited to go see Bruno Mars this year with her, so her and my son both so really excited about seeing them, I think that he maybe will take the cake. But I would say if I had to pick one right now, it'd be hardy. And the reason being is because it was pouring down rain out. It was an outdoor concert, and he had the opportunity to sing under a canopy, but he did not take that opportunity. He came out with the crowd, and he was just as wet as we were, and it just seemed like he was a stand up guy. And his music is awesome too. So he's a little bit of that country, but also has some metal and some rock mixed in there as well. Kind of goes back to my high school days, so I, like Hardy, would probably take the take the crown on that one for so far.

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Kara Snyder 19:39

Oh, that sounds like a great show, absolutely. And Troy, I ask everybody that comes on the podcast Avantis gondola, or pub, two cheese balls.

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Troy Deiss 19:49

Pub two cheese balls, hands down, can't go wrong. The gondola. I'm a fan, but the cheese balls are where they're at, for sure.

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Kara Snyder 19:57

And one last question for you, if you could give one piece. Piece of advice to a college student, what would you say?

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Troy Deiss 20:03

Well, I think, and this just goes back to, kind of my background that we all you know as a college student, you have a goal in mind. You have probably a career in mind, but always be willing to kind of say yes, and always be willing to kind of step out of your comfort zone, because you never know what that next role or that next item is going to be. We've all heard that. The saying that don't burn bridges, and that's absolutely true, is that you never know when you're going to come full circle once again. And I'm a prime example that when Morton industries I left on good terms and came back full circle and was just willing and open to do anything the company was asking me to do. And that's within, you know, obviously, within, you know, the realm of growing as an individual and growing as a company. And that's really helped me in my career, and I think it'll help most people. Just put your head down. I have three rules too, and I give these three rules to my kids. They're probably sick of hearing them. But also, I talk about these rules at new hire orientation every Monday. And there's three things that I feel like would help you advance in careers as those that want to so one, simply be kind to offer grace to individuals, because you never know what they're going through. And the last one is just be the hardest working person in the room, and you're not going to go unnoticed.

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Kara Snyder 21:15

That is great advice. Thank you so much for sharing Absolutely And thanks again for being here with us. That was Troy dice, Vice President of Operations for Morton industries, join us next time on the podcast for more stories from our cast, alumni, foreign.