VEX is Life-Changing: Vex Online Essay Challenge

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When I first walked into the ACTC Technology Center in Williamston, SC, I had no idea what I was going to do with my life. I decided to try out robotics because I’ve always been a science-fiction nut and because it sounded very interesting. Currently, robotics has not only become a hobby for me, it’s become part of my life. I had no idea what was in store for me when I signed up for Team 415A, but it has changed my life in more ways than I can count.

When I started robotics, it was my school’s first year with VEX; Helios Team 415A was the only team. This put us in a situation where no one on the team was quite sure what to expect when the competition came. That being said, we had to build a robot without any idea as to what strategies and building techniques worked. When we finished brainstorming, we had so many ideas that we eventually had to use a design matrix to help narrow down the design. I can’t quite describe the feeling of watching all of our ideas coming together to form one great, almighty design; it’s just awesome! I soon fell into the role of note-keeper: organizing the team’s engineering notebook, website, and pictures. Being in charge of the notebook taught me a valuable lesson on how important documentation is! We ended up going to the World Championship last year, our first year, because our notebook helped us earn the Excellence Award. I couldn’t believe it! Our robot didn’t win on the field at the SC State Qualifier. However, through quality documentation, we had a notebook that covered all of the ins and outs of our season and our robot.

The sheer size of the World Championship made my head spin. I’d never seen that many robots together in my life. Our robot failed miserably in the competition, but we learned so much while we were there that we didn’t really care. While in California, we learned the effectiveness of harvesters and mecanum wheels, which are two major features on our robot this year. The social aspect of being there is astounding as well. I came into contact with so many people from around the world who have the same interests as me. Being a scout for my team at competitions also helped me learn about what features other robots were bringing to the competition. The whole experience taught me several lessons that I’ve carried over to this year. I believe that our robot this year will be much more competitive on the field as a result of incorporating design ideas I saw last year. Also, our documentation is in top form!

Being in Helios Team 415A has taught me better ways to build robots and better strategies for communicating with others (I have always been very shy!). I now want a career in the robot industry and to help design robots that aid in the home, construction, and military. I have also learned the impact documentation has in the business and engineering world, and I now know that all jobs on the team are equally important. I plan to do robotics for many more years. One day I want to make a name for myself through robots.