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CIVIL ENGINEERING ACADEMY PODCAST

Hosted By Isaac Oakeson

CEA 58 - DUNN AND ASSOCIATES STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING PRESIDENT TAIT KETCHAM

The stories behind people's reasons for getting into civil engineering are just as unique as their aspirations once they get into the field. While some of us dream about working on a particular project, whether it be building the highest skyscraper on Earth or the brand new stadium of our favorite basketball team, others visualize themselves stepping up into management roles and becoming the president of national, or even multinational engineering firms. Today's guest is a perfect example of a successful engineer who followed his passion for a specific discipline of the field, and proved to everyone else that engineers do have the soft skills needed to tackle the day-to-day, non-technical tasks.

Today, Isaac talks to [Tait Ketcham](#), the current president at [Dunn Associates, Inc](#), in Salt Lake City, Utah, and the past president of the [Structural Engineers Association of Utah](#) (SEAU). After spending his childhood building

things out of wood, he developed a strong interest in construction and design, and since then has worked on many cool projects and contributed to the development of many cities.

While still in school, and after giving a shot at various disciplines, he developed an inner passion for structural engineering, and this passion has guided him throughout his career so far. However, his first real job was with the [Utah Department of Transportation \(UDOT\)](#), dealing with highways and roads. Since this was not a job related to what he really liked, he decided to take the leap and try to get a job with some of the smaller structural engineering firms in town, even though one of the side effects of this move was making less than he was previously making with UDOT. This move turned out to be pretty successful and it actually led him to work on huge and notable projects such as the [Memphis Grizzlies stadium](#) and the [Hale Centre Theater](#).

Now, as a president of a big engineering firm, his current daily schedule is somewhat different from that when he was just starting out as a young engineer. In addition to dealing with client-related tasks, meetings and all that comes with running a huge business — which proves that we, engineers, also have people skills — he also devotes some time to the personal one-on-one mentoring of the younger engineers they hire fresh out of school.

He gives tips to young engineers who may want to pursue the structural engineering path in their careers, with one of them being getting the student license for [Revit](#), a computer program by Autodesk, and starting to familiarize themselves with the tool, because that's what his firm often uses for their projects.

In this interview, Tait talks about his passion for the role that our field plays in shaping and positively impacting societies, the many different paths an undergraduate student can take in the field, given its huge branch of segments, as well as the mistakes that taught him the greatest lessons in engineering and life in general. Going through school, studying for the FE or the PE, and dealing with the day-to-day tasks of meeting deadlines and resolving issues that come up onsite may sound hard. But according to Tait, *“Passion is contagious.”*

Resources

[Civil Engineering Academy](#) - If you need exams, solved problems or courses, make sure to check out our home base

[CEA Community](#) – Haven't joined up on our free community? What's wrong with you? J/K. Ok, just go there and join a group of like-minded civil engineers!

[CEA Newsletter](#) - Join over 4000 engineers like you and learn the tips and tricks to passing the FE and PE. We even have a free resource for you!

[Civil PE Review Course](#) - The only thing you need to ace the PE exam;

[Civil FE Review Course](#) - The only thing you need to ace the FE exam;

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