IT manager advises students, co-workers on technology, life

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After years of working in various banks around town, Tom Prinz, manager of Support Services, decided to have a change of pace by switching to IU Southeast.

And after three years Prinz has found it has been an enjoyable experience.

"I changed for different circumstances," Prinz said.

"I really wanted to work, and did not want to retire. Plus the commute is short."

"I like working with the kids and being exposed to the academic environment, which is so different from the corporate environment."

Prinz said the atmosphere here is also less stressful.

"I do not have to worry about servers and phone switches," he said.

He said he thought a breath of fresh air was what he needed. So now he manages the IT department, on the top floor of University Center South.

A normal day for Prinz includes various meetings, visiting the computer labs and a lot of analytical work.

"I try to figure out what is the best way to spend our money and what is the best way to save our money," he said.

Along with those responsibilities, Prinz is also in charge of hiring consultants to help in the computer labs.

Prinz said the job is pretty easy.

"Consultants staff the lab and make sure the printers are full of paper," he said.

"They are also responsible for being at OneStart and Oncourse to help students with questions they may have."

However, he said he finds that a number of students have gotten more computer savvy and that they have been dealing with less complex questions.

Prinz said while he is well staffed with lab consultants, which was not the case a few months ago.

"For a while we were really struggling," Prinz said. "This last year it has been tough finding people to come. Several students graduated who have been working for us for years or they have found other jobs on and off campus."

Tom Prinz

Many students were as sad to leave as Prinz was to see them go.

Basil Mumaw III, a history major, has been attending IU Southeast since 2001 and has been working here since 2003.

Recently he transferred from being the lead consultant in computer services to the office services assistant in media services.

As a lead consultant, Mumaw helped train new consultants, assist other consultants with difficult technical questions and provided assistance on the scheduling process.

"My experience working with Tom has been very enjoyable," Mumaw said. "He's a wonderful boss and is kind and understanding."

Mumaw said in addition to being a good boss Prinz also helped him out in other areas of his life.

"He has given me valuable advice about career paths and life in general," he said. "Plus, he has never hesitated to write me a letter of recommendation for any jobs I have applied for."

Mumaw said he considers Prinz both a role model and a friend.

"He was a delight to work for and I really enjoy his company," he said.

Christine Thompson, business senior, said she agrees. As one of the lead computer lab consultants, Thompson said that her experience working with Prinz has been excellent.

"You could not ask for a better boss," she said. "He is fair, easy to talk to and an all around great person."

Thompson, who will graduate in the spring, also said since Prinz has an undergraduate degree in accounting which is similar to hers he has given her advice on several classes and helped with her post-college job search.

Thompson said Prinz is also very understanding with working with students about their school and work schedules.

"He knows we are students first and foremost, and works with us if we need time off to study or work on a group project," she said.

Another person who has had a positive experience working with Prinz is Shawn Hanes, social informatics major.

As a lead support specialist for the last three years, Hanes said he has grown to admire and respect Prinz over the years.

"He is a friend that I enjoy talking with," Hanes said. "I have sought and appreciated his counsel many times."

Hanes said Prinz has helped him grow in his ability to succeed.

"He places his trust in me and holds me to expectations that challenge me," he said.

He also considers Prinz as more than a boss.

"Tom is such a friend, that when I see his car, I exclaim, 'Tom's here, yes,'" Hanes said.

Joe Denison, who graduated in 2007 with a degree in political science, has been working for Prinz since June of 2005.

"Tom is one of the best bosses I have ever had in my 18 years in the workforce," Denison said.

Denison said as a non-traditional student he respects the fact that Prinz understands the demands that school and family places on students.

"He tries to work around our schedule as much as he can," Denison said.

He said even though the jobs he hired for are technical in some aspects, he also focuses on people skills just as much.

Prinz said he agrees this is an important part of a lab consultant.

"I look for good customer service skills, and an engaging personality," Prinz said. "We can teach you the other the stuff you need to do the job."

And while they are now fully staffed, Prinz said he is always on the look out for new lab consultants.

Students who are interested in a job as a lab consultant can check the career services page on the IU Southeast Web site where Prinz posts job searches.

'A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.'

– Lao-tsu

IUS custodian concentrates on community involvement, educating fellow co-workers

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She cleans the restrooms and offices in University Center South before she takes trash out.

Pearline Molet, IUS custodian, doesn't speak to anyone.

Instead, she signs with her hands.

Molet has been deaf for her entire life. Being a custodian is relaxing to her.

"Other jobs weren't to my liking," she said. "I like it here. It's comfortable."

IUS has employed her for nine years now.

Two of those years, she worked in the library during the night shift.

Now she works Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.

She begins work so early because the offices are empty when she starts.

She said said she doesn't like to interrupt anyone while they're working.

Molet said it's not challenging to work with other people at IU Southeast.

"I'm kind of used to it," she said. "Some people sign here. Some don't sign too well, but I still say 'C'mon, c'mon' to encourage them to try."

Reading lips is challenging for her since she can only catch a couple words in a sentence.

She said she prefers to sign or to write on paper.

That's why she loves using e-mail, her pager and her Sidekick to text people. She said she's always using those tools to keep in touch with people.

With so many options, she said communication is easier than it used to be when she was growing up.

Molet attended elementary school at the Kentucky School for the Deaf in Danville, Ky. She started living in their dormitories when she was six years old.

She said she was always a reluctant leader as a child.

"When I was 12, that's when segregation was happening, we went with the white kids," she said.

"We'd join the white kids and I tried to get the other black kids too. I was always the leader."

Molet moved out of school when she was 17. One year later, she married a man named Henry.

They met when his sister introduced them to each other.

That's also when she started going to Ivy Tech to obtain a GED. She earned her degree and started to raise a family.

She had four children over the next four years.

She said those were busy times considering all of the responsibilities she undertook.

She said it was hard for a married, deaf couple to find great jobs.

She worked for Goodwill for two years, a restaurant for nine months, one dry cleaner for three years and another dry cleaner for about four years.

Then she worked for a deaf community center inside Goodwill.

During that time period, Molet started volunteering more often in the deaf community. She volunteered for the Deaf Olympics in Louisville.

"It was a tough job," she said. "I cooked for kids, about 400 kids, then. There were lots of sports they played."

She's helped children before through other activities.

At church, she would participate in prayer chains and taught some children sign language.

Church has been a big part of her life.

She said she tries to be active by getting flowers for events, giving money for cards and sometimes helping at parties.

The best part, she said, has been cooking for church social events.

"I just like it," Molet said. "Life isn't always fair to people, so we should all help when we can."

People try to help her in return.

That includes her boss, Physical Plant Director Bob Snip.

'I'm kind of used to it. Some people sign here. Some don't sign too well, but I still say 'C'mon, c'mon' to encourage them to try.'

Pearline Molet
custodian
Physical Plant

He's tried to learn the sign alphabet and has been trying to get a class together to teach sign language.

He said about 10 or 12 of Molet's co-workers are interested in learning to sign.

They already use texting and group phones to keep in constant contact.

Snip said they need to keep contact strong because they have a lot of area to clean up.

Darryl Parker, supervisor of Building Services, said the department cleans up an average of 25,000 square feet at IU Southeast.

That means Molet covers around 2,000 square feet every day.

She said she has to get up early, around 3:00 a.m., to prepare for work.

Yet she said she's not exhausted when she gets home after cleaning all day.

"I actually start cooking when I get home," she said.

"I don't sit around. Besides, I usually go to bed around nine or 10 each night."

Time used to be harder to manage. She said she used to clean houses for extra income.

Now she focuses on her job and her life with her husband at home.

Her husband can only hear loud noises.

That means he can speak a little bit as well, but prefers to sign.

"There's really no difficulty around the house," Molet said.

"We're very comfortable with communication. We all sign. It's easy because we're around it all the time."

Molet's eight grandchildren also sign.

One of them is deaf as well. She said the only tough part about being deaf is just communication outside of her house.

The rest, she said, she can deal with.