

Hello Educational & Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Derek Caron, and I am here to share how my experience as a member of FIRST Robotics Team 2648 has prepared me for real-world jobs by mirroring the operations of a small business. Being part of a robotics team goes beyond learning about technology and engineering; it is an immersive experience that fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and strategic planning. Our team functioned like a small business in a lot of ways, with each member contributing to Infinite Loop's success overall. In my role on the team, I managed the control system and programming of the robot. This position demanded technical expertise in both hardware and software, as I was responsible for ensuring the robot was competition ready before and during our events. Through this experience, I honed my problem-solving skills, learning to research and troubleshoot complex issues while optimizing the robot's performance through our building season. These skills are indispensable in my work and the real world, where methodical and collaborative approaches are crucial.

Fundraising was vital for our team's sustainability and competitiveness. We secured sponsorships from local businesses and organized demo events, inviting the community to interact with the robot and learn about our team. This not only funded our efforts but also strengthened community ties.

The FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) program emphasizes technical skills alongside business acumen and community impact. Teams are recognized for their sustainable business models and STEAM advocacy through awards like the Business Plan Award and the Engineering Inspiration Award. These awards are usually judged by a panel with industry professionals at each event, encouraging teams to prioritize sustainability and strategic planning for the future.

Technical challenges in designing and building the robot demanded innovative problem-solving and teamwork. At the Boston Regional event, we faced obstacles requiring quick thinking, such as rebuilding large sections of our robot on the first day to be completed and ready by the next morning. This ability to analyze and resolve complex problems with a timeline has prepared me for real-world challenges in my own work.

In conclusion, my time with FIRST Robotics Team 2648 has been instrumental in equipping me with skills essential for today's workforce. It taught me to think critically, manage projects, and collaborate effectively—skills vital in any business environment. I am grateful for the profound impact this program has had on my personal and professional development and the lifelong friends I had made in the process.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my story.

Derek Caron

Senior Systems Specialist, OT&A

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