



#WeAreViskoTeepak

## Ayleen Gonzalez: Sales & Tech Manager of the Southwest Region

I first heard of this job this past June when visiting the career fair at the Reciprocal Meat Conference in Iowa. That's where I met Brandon Goehring (VT Technical Representative) and Billy Ertl (VT Kenosha's Human Resources Generalist), and later that day, unbeknownst to me, Brandon went to speak to different professors asking if they knew anyone that would be a good fit for this job opportunity. And luckily for me, two of those professors were Dr. Davey Griffin and Dr. Kerri Gehring, who are two individuals that are close mentors of mine from Texas A&M University. And when asked who they felt could best fill this role, both graciously said my name. Flash forward to the next day, Brandon came to find me and asked if we could have a quick informal interview to further discuss the role. After asking what I wanted to do for a living and which six celebrities I wished to have dinner with, the interview was over. I knew at that moment, I was going to do all that it took to get this sales/tech role because it perfectly encompassed everything I wanted in a future career, as it allowed me to talk to a wide range of individuals daily while giving me the opportunity to problem-solve in different situations.

However, to my surprise, after my meeting with Brandon, it felt like radio silence from the other side. I did not pay too much attention to it as I was gearing up to defend my master's thesis and finalize everything for my graduation in August. After a few weeks, when the buzz from my defense finally died down, I got a call from the HR department in Kenosha, Wisconsin asking if I was available to have a quick phone interview. Unannounced to them, I was in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico on a family vacation, but I was not going to miss this opportunity. So, through crashing waves, poor cell signals, and one dropped call, I was able to make it through probably one of the most stressful HR phone interviews in my life.

However, after getting that call, once again, it was radio silent for weeks, but this time, I was only a month out from graduation, and I needed to buckle down my plans for life after grad school. Thus, I started applying for other jobs, and with that came job offers with deadlines from these companies. At this moment, I am beyond stressed because in the back of my mind that I am still thinking about this opportunity with ViskoTeepak, but I have no clue where I stand against the other applications or if I am even still in the running and the last thing, I want to do is turn down these other offers for a job I don't even have a potential of getting. At the moment, I did the only thing I could do and sent an email to Brandon asking if he could give me any insight into where I stood. To my surprise, I get a call from Brandon in the next twenty minutes where he explains that he can't tell me anything for certain, but if he was in my position, he would wait it out. After an hour-long freak out I finally decided I was going to take the risk and reject the job offers I currently had and continue to pursue this potential opportunity.



Graduated with a degree in Animal Science

Graduation time!



Finally, after another week and a half of waiting, I got an email from our Sales Director, Greg Davidson, telling me that I had advanced to the next stage and if I was available for a phone interview. When the time comes for my phone interview, I step outside my house because I am one of those people that needs to pace while on the phone. Everything on my end seemed to be going great during this interview until Greg said, "Hey, I am going, to be honest with you" at that moment I stopped dead in my tracks, and my heart dropped. Greg proceeds with, "There are three other candidates we are interviewing for this position [okay, that's a 25% shot, not too bad], and we are only taking two to Kenosha for in-person interviews [oh that's fine, that's a 50% chance]. In addition, out of all the candidates, you are the only one without sales experience and by far the youngest." At this moment, I thought my chances were completely in the ground, but I was not ready to call it quits. Thus, I explained to Greg while I do not have any sales experiences, I do have an amazing personality, and that's something you cannot teach, and given the opportunity, I will prove it to him.

Again, two more weeks went by, and I heard nothing from ViskoTeepak, until one day, I woke up to an email inviting me to come to Kenosha for an in-person interview. After I did my little excitement dance, I quickly replied, "yes!" The week of my interview was a big one because that Friday, I would also be walking the stage for my graduation.

Two weeks later, Monday rolled around, and I would be flying out to Kenosha for my interview. I quite literally had one of the earliest mornings ever in my life as my flight was at 5 in the morning, and there was no way I would be missing it, so I got to the airport at 3:00 am with my hair and makeup done ready to go. To my luck the plane ended up being delayed for a little over an hour, but eventually, I finally landed in Chicago. Once Greg picked me up to take me to the plant, he started explaining that I would be meeting with six different people, that each portion would take roughly an hour, and we would end the day with dinner with everyone. In efforts to recharge my social battery in

my sleep-deprived state, panic starts racing through me. But to my luck, once I got to Kenosha and started the interview process it was nothing like I expected. While yes, everyone in the first 20 minutes asked questions related to this field to gauge my knowledge; however, most of the interviewees then took a turn of us talking about our personal lives. And that just furthered my desire to join the ViskoTeepak family because all the individuals I met that day during my interview didn't want to just test my knowledge but wanted to get to know me as much as I wanted to get to know them. The same thing was said for dinner, everyone made an incredible effort to make me feel welcome, and I truly felt at home.

The very following day, Greg was driving me back to the Chicago airport, and as soon as we arrived, he hit me again with, "Hey, I am going to be honest with you." Just like before, my heart drops again! He let me know that he was going to pick up my competition as soon as he dropped me off, but it seemed like everyone liked me and that they were going to have a meeting Friday to discuss both candidates. At that moment, all I could think about was that he couldn't give me a more definite answer than just "seemed"!

That Friday rolled around, and like I mentioned earlier, that was also my graduation day. Of course, I have a big mouth, so all week I have been telling people how much I enjoyed my interview and that they will be having a meeting discussing both candidates today. So naturally, everyone in my family and my mentors have been asking me all day if I have heard anything back, and by the fiftieth "no" by 5:00 pm everyone got the memo to no longer asks. At this point, I am trying to tell myself anything and everything to not freak out. I finally concluded that they probably got busy Friday, and I will hear something first thing Monday morning. Well, Monday morning rolls around, and due to all the nerves, I wake up at 6 in the morning, now patiently waiting by my phone. Eventually, 8 am, 10 am, 12 pm, and then 3 pm rolled around, and I still heard nothing. At this point of the day, I have concluded that they must have given the job to the other candidate. And just as the depression hit, I received a call from a (262) number, letting me know that I have received a job offer.

While coming into this job opportunity with not just zero sales experience but being fresh out of school, I have learned the importance of making an incredible first impression and carrying that into building the foundation for even greater relations with people. I plan to continuously use this lesson as I carry myself forward as I represent ViskoTeepak with industry leaders, colleagues, and anyone else I have the pleasure of meeting.