



“If you’re on the fence, grab the bull by its horns and go for it! It can be scary to try something new, but scary is sometimes necessary to make a positive change in your life.”

Mayra Rodriguez

Buyer, Manufacturing Engineering Technology

CAREER QUICK LOOK

Years in Field
7 + years

City/State
San Diego County, CA

Specialties
- New Product Introduction
- Sourcing (Domestic & International)
- Continuous Improvements
- Inventory Control
- Cross-functional Collaboration

Degree
AS, Manufacturing Engineering Technology

Career Goals
Obtain MFET Industry Certifications

Personal Time
Travelling and hiking in the great outdoors



Getting Started

Mayra had started a new job working in customer service for a manufacturing company and she was taking political science courses at the local community college. She wanted to improve her career prospects so when a colleague told her about the Manufacturing Engineering Technology (MFET) program at San Diego City College, she was immediately interested. She did some research and decided to go for it - even though she had no background in engineering or manufacturing. **MFET was outside her comfort zone, but political science was not grabbing her attention and she knew she needed to make a change.**

Education

Mayra started out in a certificate program for Lean Six Sigma Manufacturing. She was hoping to get a better understanding of the manufacturing process and the perspective of the engineers she worked with. **“From there, I just fell in love with the program.”**

Mayra was motivated to aim higher and ended up pursuing an Associates in Manufacturing Engineering Technology.

She appreciated the hands-on experience in the classroom. Taking a product all the way through its lifecycle—from the planning stage, to technical drawings, to fabrication in the classroom—gave her insight into the commercial process and taught her how to troubleshoot. The electric guitar course was her favorite: **“How cool is it to create a guitar, understand how it works, and then finally connect it to the amplifier and actually play it!”**

Mayra completed the program part time in the evenings. Most of the other students were also working full time during the day and taking classes at night. They helped each other out with difficult coursework and developed a strong bond.

Mayra says that the best thing about the program were the instructors: **“They were very passionate about the topics. What they were teaching connected to the real world and they used examples and case studies from their work in industry to help students master the curriculum - they really made the curriculum come alive. They mentored us.”**

Mayra shares, **“The world is rapidly changing with ground breaking and innovative technology. Being a contributor in the success of new innovations in technology is rewarding beyond words.”**

Career Ladder

Mayra’s enrollment in the MFET program had immediate rewards for her in the workplace. Shortly after enrolling, Mayra was given the opportunity to move from customer service into an entry-level purchasing position. From there, she has worked her way up the career ladder to become the senior buyer for an engineering company that specializes in additive manufacturing. The technical expertise Mayra gained from the MFET program enables her to recommend revisions to the manufacturing process to the engineers in Research and Development, trimming processes and cutting costs. Mayra’s deep knowledge of the manufacturing process is highly valued – she is respected as a subject matter expert and her skill sets in both buying and manufacturing are in high demand. To continue to advance professionally and financially, Mayra is currently pursuing industry certifications in Lean Six Sigma, Supply Chain, and Contracts, alongside her bachelor’s degree.

Labor Market

San Diego County is a manufacturing hub, especially for the biotech and electronics industry. **Mayra says that a MFET certificate got her foot in the door of a career as a buyer-and other women should also take advantage of this opportunity.**

She points out that many advanced research and development teams have trouble finding the purchasing agents and buyers with deep technical expertise that they need. **Entry-level purchasing agents with technical credentials start at \$45-\$50,000 and can make \$60-\$80,000 as they progress.** With additional certifications and a bachelor’s degree they can expect to move into the six-figure range. MFET graduates will have highly transferrable skills across industries that are in high demand in the labor market.

Working with Men

Mayra has two separate groups of colleagues: those in procurement, who are mostly women, and those in Research and Development (R&D), who are mostly men. So how does she find working with the mostly male engineer R&D staff? It really depends on the company’s culture and leadership. She’s noticed that in some companies they aren’t used to working with a woman and colleagues sometimes seem to “tip-toe” around her, wanting to make sure they are being politically correct. Sometimes they have used a different tone of voice when talking with her or excluded her from informal meetings. But when colleagues see the value she brings to the company, she’s been able to overcome this and become part of the team. Her MFET degree also helps here, giving her the confidence to be assertive when she knows she’s on solid technical ground.

Workplace

Mayra enjoys being the go-to technical person on the procurement team. She is also proud of her ability to improve difficult procurement processes. She recalls one instance where there was a lot of “tribal” knowledge about what procurement did - the system had failed and few staff understood what they were doing. In response, Mayra was trying to systematize the procurement process and, initially, she faced a lot of resistance. But over time she was able to change the culture. Eventually, the engineers came to recognize that procurement was an essential part of the engineering process. Multiple directors recognized her unique contribution to strengthening the team and helping them to see the importance of continuous improvement. **“This is exactly what I was made to do, to help make changes in a process and to help others to understand that I am there to help them, just like they are there to help me.”**

“What really appealed to me was SDCC’s Manufacturing Engineering Technology Certificate, it allowed me to advance within my career, and from there, I just fell in love with the program.”

For more information

Kenny Heifner
Professor
Manufacturing Engineering Technology
kheifner@sdccd.edu
1-765-602-1286

