

The indispensable engineers

What engineers do is so infinite and various that the discipline beggars description. They take science and use it to solve the problems and challenges of life, from the eraser on your pencil to the exploration of Mars. Lately there's been a lot of discussion about the "knowledge-based" society to come, but engineers have always lived in a knowledge-based society. They've shaped our high-tech world-and every year the whole country honors them through National Engineers Week.

Mobil's interest in the celebration is obvious: we make our living through high technology. Engineers – probing oceans, jungles, and mountains; in their research labs; at their computers – help us find and produce the raw materials and natural resources that Mobil customers require. Engineers help us move these resources to where they're needed, design ways to refine and manufacture them, market the fuels and products that result. We couldn't get along without them – and neither could you.

So many simple needs – thread, a paper clip, a spoon, a shoelace, good water from the tap, a clean sheet of paper – depend on engineers. Their name itself means they are the contrivers, and at its root, that they embody talent. They make things. They fix things. They dream things – like light bulbs, moon rockets, and horizontal oil wells – that never were. And we are all better off because they make those dreams come true.

Not everyone wants to be an engineer, at play (as Isaac Newton put it) upon the shores of the great ocean of truth. Business, the arts, and many other occupations and professions offer satisfying careers to millions. But engineers are in demand.

For our part, we've launched a number of programs to attract the best students – in engineering and other disciplines we require – for careers at Mobil. At certain key universities, a team of Mobil employees from different operating units visits regularly to meet students and teachers, share ideas and set up internships that provide potential recruits with hands-on technical experience. We also provide scores of grants designed to keep U.S. engineering expertise among the world's best and to fund research that expands U.S. technological capabilities.

Engineers are the world's worst at tooting their own horn. Most are so busy getting the job done – turning out quality products, protecting the environment, safeguarding public health – that they have little time to crow. But this reticence has harmed their need to attract tomorrow's crop of engineers: The young people who must design and manage the 21st Century. There are rewarding careers and immense challenges awaiting any youth who prepares for the engineering profession.

The global economy is upon us. Those countries – and companies – that prepare for its highly competitive enterprise and technological sophistication will flourish. Since engineers will be in the front lines of that struggle, we hope everyone will join their yearly celebration of science, invention, and creativity.

They'll probably be as quiet as usual during National Engineers Week – but let's make sure they all hear three rousing cheers from the rest of us.

-From Mobil Oil, on the occasion of the first Engineers Week.