

Aaron P. Woods Not Your Average Engineer The Boeing Company



“Exposure is the gateway to greatness ... INROADS provided me with exposure to business leadership and excellence early and often. It made all the difference!”

Aaron Woods’ life has been interlaced with INROADS starting from a very young age. His father worked at INROADS as Managing Director for the Southeast Region. On countless occasions, he would join his dad at the INROADS Jacksonville offices, or travel with him for business meetings and events. Through these experiences, Aaron was introduced to the world of minority excellence and encouraged to take a similar path in his own career.

As young as 11, Aaron began attending INROADS events like Leadership Development Institute and the INROADS Year-End Banquet. Such early exposure resulted in a paradigm shift. “From my youth, I was seeing other minority students who were sharp, involved in business, who had full-time jobs and [were] also in college, taking their futures seriously.” Having real-life role models who were living the mission of INROADS helped solidify his identity and shape his positive outlook in terms of what he could achieve.

Aaron began his college career at Jacksonville University (JU) as a student-athlete, majoring in Civil Engineering and Physics. He started at defensive back for the JU Dolphins football team and joined INROADS as an intern during his sophomore year of college. In pursuit of a dual-degree in engineering, Aaron made the tough decision to leave JU and also discontinue his football career. He began attending the University of Florida to complete the engineering portion of his dual program. Although his transition was not easy, he looks back on the decision as one of his best choices.

While at the University of Florida, he continued to be dedicated to his studies. He interned with CSX Transportation and a couple of other sponsoring companies. He credits INROADS as one of the organizations that helped him become “not your average engineer.” Through INROADS, he worked in Fortune 500 companies in both business and engineering departments. In addition to his internship, he attended INROADS weekend workshops in areas such as resume writing, speaking and interviewing, which strengthened his soft skills and made him stand out from the typical engineer.

Eventually, Aaron graduated summa cum laude, making the most of his INROADS experience. “For the first time in my life, I was just a student. I was able to engage more deeply in my studies and internships. This made a big difference when applying for graduate school. As a result, I earned a full scholarship to attend The University of Texas at Austin for my Master’s degree.”

Aaron succeeded in becoming a Quality Engineer for The Boeing Company — the world’s largest aircraft manufacturer. He also utilized his knowledge of science, the arts and business for entrepreneurship success by starting his own marketing company called Look’N4 Marketing. When asked about his decision to start his own business, he said, “It’s more than just working for myself. Business leadership at the highest level is about creating systems and opportunities for other people to do the work they love.” He is now on his way to earning a Master’s Certificate in Marketing Management through Harvard’s Extension School.

Through INROADS, “I was given a level of exposure to the job market and real-life work conditions that most people my age (minority or not) weren’t getting. This allowed me to test my knowledge and skills, and practice what it meant to be a consummate professional — being on time, how to present, how to communicate my ideas and add value in meaningful ways. Exposure is the gateway to greatness. When you have good exposure, it changes everything.”

Aaron is a strong voice for the opportunities available through the INROADS brand. His next steps are to share his wealth of success with others. He sees himself becoming a professional who encourages young students to reach towards their goals by offering his story as motivation. His first piece of advice for any upcoming INROADS intern is for them to know the impact INROADS can have on their future: “Take it seriously and apply yourself to get the full experience. Seek opportunities to be exposed to new people, places and ideas.”