



**THE TRAVELING NERD**

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"There are not enough nerds in America," Steven Follis said. "Technology is a hot industry, full of opportunity, and not enough people to fill the jobs."

Follis, who got his undergraduate degree in Management Information Systems in 2010, and his Master of Science in Information Systems a year later, always knew he wanted a job where he could use technology to make life better for people.

Although he grew up in Missouri, his college search led him to Texas. He toured several schools and found that he had a free day before going home, so on a whim, he scheduled a stop at Baylor.

"When I learned about Baylor's management information systems program, that just sealed it," he said. "It felt perfect for me. And it was. Hankamer was a wonderful experience."

And, Follis said, he believes the holistic education he received has prepared him well for his career. Follis is a consultant for Microsoft.

"All kinds of companies—large and small, public and private—buy Microsoft software. And for most companies, it fits their needs really well. But for some, out of the box, it does about 80 percent of what they need, but it would be great to get it to do that extra 20 percent," he said.

**"That's where consultants come in. We'll set up, teach and do whatever it takes for our customers to get 100 percent. And sometimes that means enhancing and customizing Microsoft software to fit their needs."**

This requires Follis to travel extensively.

"I travel Sundays through Thursdays, but I have a plane ticket home every weekend," he said. "I'm going all over the country, meeting so many people. I love it. It's an incredible experience. Every project is wildly different from the rest."

And because of the nature of what he does, Follis likes to reiterate that people skills are just as valuable as tech skills.

"People matter a lot," he said. "Finding the right people with the right skill set is important, but in this industry, skill sets are changing all the time. Technology changes every 20 minutes. The skills you really need are problem solving, creativity and communication. The days of the IT department working in solitude in some basement are in the past."

Emerging technology, he said, is opening the field like never before.

"Tech, itself, is mattering less and less. It's about how you leverage it," he said. "With things like the Cloud, you don't have to worry as much about buying a bunch of servers and many employees to keep them running. Barriers to innovation have dropped, and companies can take more risks. We have more flexibility and more speed than ever. And that means IT departments have to change the way they do things."

In the past, Follis said, companies viewed IT departments by asking how they could spend the least amount of money and still keep the systems running.

"Now IT is seen as a profit center. We are who they come to when they want to get a leg up against the competition. We're more creative," he said. "There is a lot more collaboration now with other business units, such as accounting, with marketing. We're part of finding the solutions. We help other departments to better understand customer relationships and data analysis."

We have oceans of information about our customers, and we can make that information and make it valuable and actionable for the business."

Follis also hopes that current business students who are not pursuing degrees in technology take the time to at least learn the basics.

"Basic technology skills are truly foundational," he said. "You can no longer say, 'That's IT. I don't do that, so I don't have to care about it.' Tech impacts everyone, and you sell yourself short if you don't make an effort to learn it. Technology is not something to be scared of if you don't understand it. It's not all black and white. Embrace that gray! It's something to be harnessed and used to make your job and life better."