



Brad Yanke
Product Engineer
John Deere Harvester Works-
World Wide Product Development
UW Madison- B.S. Agricultural Engineering, 2003

“Without a question, take part in at least one summer internship. These experiences will expose you to differences throughout the industry, which will help you in choosing your career.”
-Brad Yanke

He spends his time improving the process

Brad Yanke grew up immersed in agriculture. As a boy on his family’s farm, Yanke gravitated toward jobs involving equipment—tractors, combines, and the like. As he grew, his interest in heavy equipment also expanded.

After high school, Yanke joined a commercial custom harvesting business. While thinking about where the industry could take him, Yanke’s desire to pursue equipment development and testing grew. This led him to enroll in UW-Madison’s Department of Biological Systems Engineering, and eventually to take a job in his field of interest.

Yanke is currently employed as a product engineer at John Deere Harvester Works-World Wide Product Development. In this position, he spends the majority of his time designing and testing new components of the threshing and separating parts of a combine. His work starts with drafting and design, but Yanke is also responsible for following through with the validation process, once prototype parts are procured.

“Communication is a key part of my job,” Yanke states. “When a new component or product is being developed, everyone from marketing, to factory personnel, to engineers must be kept in touch to ensure the success of the product.”

Yanke states that he learned essential skills, such as communication and critical thinking, in his UW-Madison classes.

“The UW did an excellent job of technically preparing me [for my job]. I learned so many things that, at the time, I thought I’d never use. Now, I use some of those skills on a daily basis.”

He also stressed the importance of becoming involved on campus and obtaining internships. While in college, Yanke was a participant in the ¼ Scale Tractor Design Competition. Through this hands-on experience, he learned the entire design process that he now uses on a daily basis at work. He also credits internships and projects with professors as significant learning experiences. Through these opportunities, Yanke discovered invaluable contacts within the industry.

While Yanke would eventually like to become a manager of an engineering team, he has a larger dream of designing a piece of equipment that will have a lasting impact on agriculture. His experiences at UW-Madison have helped prepare him to reach these goals.