

BEFORE

After two weeks, high-fives from random students in the school hallways, a seemingly infinite influx of questions pertaining to the date of our next release, and predictions we would surely become YouTube stars became mundane occurrences. Most members of our microeconomics class decided to work with a partner to create the generic poster board; however, the class contained seven of my friends and, jokingly, we asked our teacher if we all could work together. Unexpectedly, she replied, “Yes, as long as you make the greatest project I’ve ever seen.”

We devised an innovative plan: make a music video about microeconomics and post it on YouTube. We knew our unique combination of creativity, popularity, and overall genius would not only overwhelm our teacher, but the rest of our class. However, like all original ideas, we needed a fresh approach to take us over the top. As the delegated leaders of our group, my best friend and I and sat on my porch searching for inspiration. We both glanced down my street and almost simultaneously exclaimed, “The Long Ridge Firehouse! That’s it!”

As we walked over to the firehouse to ask permission to film our music video on the premises, we noticed something unexpected. Guys were lounging outside, joking around and having a great time. They looked calm but assertive, knowing that at any moment they might have to stop everything and board a fire truck to a precarious situation. Jack and I looked at each other in a shared curiosity.

Upon reaching the half-dozen firefighters positioned outside, Jack and I both felt somewhat naïve for what we were about to ask. Obviously, they would say no. Who would let a bunch of teenagers film a music video in a firehouse for a microeconomics project? However, the man who introduced himself as Lieutenant Stu didn’t think twice before answering with an astonishing “yes.” The only catch was he would have to show us around the firehouse and the fire trucks to familiarize us with the equipment before we used it.

Two hours later, Jack and I walked back to my house in sheer amazement, with volunteer firefighter applications in hand. Nothing either of us had previously experienced was so awesome. The firehouse was three stories high and the trucks were on the main

AFTER

After two weeks, high-fives from random students accompanied by solid predictions we would become a YouTube phenomenon began to grow mundane. When assigned a final project, most students in my microeconomics class decided to work with a partner to create the generic poster board. Jokingly, seven of us asked whether we could work together. “Yes,” our teacher replied, “as long as you produce the best project I have ever seen.”

By the end of the day, we had an innovative plan. We knew our unique combination of creativity, popularity, and genius would overwhelm our teacher and the rest of the class. However, as with all original ideas, we needed a fresh approach to take us over the top. As delegated leaders, a friend and I sat outside searching for inspiration. Glancing down the street, we both shouted simultaneously, “The Firehouse! That’s it!”

Anticipating a no, we presented our proposal to the firefighters lounging outside. Who would let a bunch of teenagers film a video in a firehouse to fulfill a microeconomics project? However, the man in charge responded, “Yes, but . . .” Quickly, we agreed to the only catch; first, we had to become familiar with the equipment. In two hours, we saw every piece of equipment, in every cabinet, in every truck and learned how each component works to put out a fire and prevent a building’s collapse. “If you find firefighting interesting, why not apply as a volunteer?” the lieutenant suggested. I left with a blank application.

The importance of the microeconomics video faded, and we filmed it in one day. The video not only explained microeconomics, but also revealed the trucks’ features and secrets. As word of our success spread, we accumulated thousands of hits and an A on the project. Meanwhile, my enthusiasm for my new venture heightened, and after six months of rigorous training, I joined the firehouse as a junior member.

On my first day, a deafening alarm sounded. The voice on the loudspeaker reported an emergency, but amidst all the chaos, I heard another language. When every fireman rushed for his gear, I did the same. With sirens blasting, we zoomed past cars moving out of our way. My mind raced. “Would I remember my training? What if something went wrong?” Just as we made a sharp turn and headed up a steep hill, I felt a rush of adrenaline. Strapped

level. Stu spent the majority of the time showing us around on the trucks. He took out every single piece of equipment in every cabinet on all three of the fire trucks. Devices ranging from thermal imaging cameras, which can identify where people are located by their body heat, to roof saws, which are used to cut open roofs of houses without damaging the frames enough to cause a collapse of the building, were presented to us. After the tour, Stu told us if we found firefighting interesting, that we should apply to become volunteers. Jack and I, trying desperately to hold back our exuberance, took the applications, said thanks, and walked away.

The microeconomics music video had become of such little significance. We filmed the music video in one day. It was educational, as the lyrics explained microeconomics thoroughly. It was cool, as we showed off all of the nuances of the fire trucks and the firehouse. It was also funny, as the fact that we were in a firehouse singing about microeconomics served as quite the parody. These factors resulted in thousands of YouTube views and a 100% on the final grade we received. We had even become the most recognizable students in school because nearly everyone had seen our video. However, the only thing I gained from all of this was an application to become a volunteer firefighter.

Six months and countless physical and mental tests later, I was voted into the Long Ridge Fire Company as a junior member. It was the greatest sense of gratitude I had ever received. I was issued my equipment: a jacket, helmet, pants, gloves and boots. However, just as I was handed my last piece of gear, a deafening alarm sounded. The loudspeaker relayed what exactly was going on but to me it sounded like another language amidst all the chaos. Every fireman rushed to put his gear on and since I had just been voted in as a member, I did the same. I ran into the backseat of Engine 72, the most oft-used fire truck.

My mind was racing on the drive over to 89 Hedgeway Road. We were zooming past traffic as all the cars on the road did all they could to get out of our way. Uncertainty was pervasive. Would I remember all of my training? What would happen if I didn't know what to do? What if something goes wrong? Just as we made a sharp turn and headed up a steep hill, I found solace in remembering that this was exactly the position I wanted to be in. This was exhilarating. It was a huge thrill. I was strapped into the backseat of a fire truck with great friends whom just a few months ago were complete strangers. At that moment, I had never been so happy to have sarcastically asked my teacher to let me work in a group with seven friends of mine.

into the back seat of Engine 72, suddenly, I knew exactly what to do when the truck reached the burning building.

We evacuated the house, extinguished the fire, and saved a home. Not only had my instincts helped me fight the fire, but they also had led me to the firehouse in the first place. Soon, I began to pay more attention to my intuition and its influence on my decision-making. Today, accompanied by months of research and careful consideration, it only confirms my conviction Princeton University stands out as the best school to help me fulfill my dreams.