Case Study: Vehicle Breakdown Engineer - Eddie

What do you do?
I'm a vehicle breakdown engineer. I'm contracted to a large garage to deal with emergency breakdowns on the road. I also do some repair work back at the garage, including battery replacement, oil changes, tyre repairs, brake service and tune-ups.

What is your background?
I used to be a commercial truck driver, doing local and long distance hauling.

After a while, I started to get tired of the long distance work. I've always been quite handy, so I decided to qualify as a car mechanic. Then I applied for this job. Perhaps one day I'd like to work for one of the large national organisations.

What characteristics do you need to be successful in your job?
You need to work quickly. People are often stranded in bad weather, in the middle of roads or in accidents, so your response time has to be fast.

It also helps to be agreeable. These people are usually in bad moods to begin with and you don't want to contribute to any more problems.

What other jobs could you do using the skills from this job?
This job demands good customer service skills, which can open up lots of doors to other areas of work where you are dealing with people.

What changes will there be in the future?
I can't see the demand for us declining at all. I do think that vehicle breakdown engineers will need to keep very up to date with technology, especially because more and more cars use computers. We increasingly use laptop computers to find out what's gone wrong.

What are the biggest challenges in your job?
Getting vehicles out of tight spaces, like low clearance garages or from in between two other cars, is one of the most challenging aspects of the job.

Are there many opportunities to enter this career?
Yes, there are opportunities throughout the country.

What do you like about your job?
It's got to be helping people. I've helped people get out of ditches; I've towed them home in freezing blizzards. People really appreciate the work I do.

What do you dislike about your job?
Repair work at the roadside is potentially dangerous, especially when there is poor visibility and bad weather. Generally, I don't much like battling away in heavy rain or freezing cold, but it's my job to get the customers out of that nasty situation as soon as possible.

What advice would you give to someone interested in your career?
You need very good technical knowledge, so find out everything you can about motor vehicles and get trained up as a mechanic first and foremost.

**A day in the life**

8:00 am - 8:15 am
Driving to the first call.

8:15 am - 9:00 am
Helping a car owner jump start his car battery.

9:00 am - 9:30 am
Driving to the next call.

9:30 am - 10:15 am
Hooking up a customer’s car and retrieving it from a ditch.

10:15 am - 10:30 am
Driving to the next call.

10:30 am - 10:45 am
Changing a customer’s car tyre on the hard shoulder of the motorway.

10:45 am - 11:15 am
Driving back to the garage.

11:15 am - 11:45 am
Break.

11:45 am - 12:15 pm
Driving to the next call.

12:15 pm - 1:00 pm
Hooking up and towing a customer’s car to the garage to fix the engine.

1:00 - 1:30 pm
Eating lunch.

1:30 - 2:00 pm
Driving to the next call.

2:00 - 3:00 pm
Jump starting a customer’s car battery; when the jump start doesn't work, towing the car to the garage.

3:00 - 4:00 pm
Finishing paperwork on the service calls and tows.