In a recent industry seminar class, Utah State University Outdoor Product Design and Development students were able to learn from Aggie alum Dawson Westenskow, an experienced outdoor industry product manager. During his time with companies including Thule, REI, and Oboz Footwear, Westenskow not only brought product to market, but learned valuable lessons about what it takes to break into and succeed in the outdoor industry.

Westenskow shared his thoughts on what it takes to secure a job in the outdoor industry, starting with building a strong network implementing underutilized tools like LinkedIn to reach employers and hiring managers. In addition to connecting online, Westenskow said that most designers in the industry want to give back and be a mentor, and that asking for thirty minutes of their time to ask questions and learn about their role can go a long way.

Once a student has secured an interview with a company, Westenskow mentioned the need to communicate not only technical skills with a portfolio, but a passion for products. He emphasized the importance of communicating and driving your own unique story when seeking a position.

Watch Westenskow’s full presentation below as well as an interview on the Highlander Podcast.

Industry collaborations made possible through the Manufacturing and Outdoor Products Support Hub, a partnership between Utah Manufacturing Extension Service and Outdoor Product Design & Development.