Rob Grossman, MBA ’08: “Be brave, and reach out!”

While Rob Grossman, MBA ’08 was a student at Smith earning his MBA, he landed himself an internship at Pratt & Whitney, an aerospace manufacturer with global service operations, as the Commercial Serviceable Assets intern. Twelve years and four positions within the company later, things have come full circle, and Rob is now the Managing Director for Commercial Serviceable Assets where he leads the CSA business in the sale and purchase of aircraft, engines, modules and parts.

Rob’s interest in aviation and aircrafts extends back to high school, when he completed a senior project on aviation after an assignment asked the students to “try something that you might consider as a future career.” Unsure of how serious he was about aviation, Rob attended the University of Maryland for his freshman year of undergrad. After just one year, he turned back to aviation, transferred to, and graduated from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. After graduation, Rob served as a flight instructor and corporate pilot for 5 years. Because of the spontaneous lifestyle of pilots, and because he ultimately didn’t feel challenged, he decided he wanted to get into the business side of aviation. This is when Rob’s and the University of Maryland’s paths crossed again as Rob chose to attend Maryland Smith for his MBA.

While at Smith, Rob deeply connected with his classmates, professors and various businesses. He attended numerous conferences to seek out network and job opportunities, and it was at one of those conferences in Atlanta, GA where he met employees from Pratt & Whitney and arranged an interview. This interview turned into a four-month internship, which then turned into a full-time job offer.

“Going from a cockpit to an office is a hugely different atmosphere. It’s a culture shock,” Rob said about his career transition. “Smith’s MBA program did a good job preparing me for this shift.”

Rob has held many roles in his 12 years at Pratt & Whitney, and he still uses what he learned in his MBA classes today. He’s held the position of shop supervisor on the assembly floor, and he’s worked in quality management, as well as in procurement. During his time managing warehousing and logistic services and operations globally, he created a consolidation plan and oversaw unprecedented growth. Now in his third year as the Managing Director for Commercial Serviceable Assets, he’s supported the company in tripling their profits in the past three years.

“Being able to fall back on what I learned at Smith, especially what I learned from Joe Bailey who was the Associate Department Chair for Decisions, Operations and Information Technology at the time, has been great,” Rob said. When asked about a specific example, Rob recalls pulling together an Altman Z-Score analysis when one of his executives asked him to create a comparison of competing bidders. After Rob proved how effective employing this metric can be, using an Altman Z-Score analysis is now standard procedure at Pratt & Whitney Global Procurement

Rob has two pieces of advice for current Smith students: “While the employers in the local region are more likely to recruit, that doesn’t mean you need to stay local. There are a lot of great opportunities outside of the D.C. area,” Rob said as he reflects on his own career journey. He also highly encourages students to leverage relationships with alumni. “There’s no harm in building those connections,” he said. “Be brave, and reach out!”