

Rob Van Etten, BE '03



Rob Van Etten is the president of Brighton Cromwell and a graduate of the University of Delaware's Class of 2003 with a degree in Finance and Marketing. In September 2008 Inc.com named Rob one of their "30 Under 30: America's Coolest Young Entrepreneurs" and Entrepreneur magazine listed Brighton Cromwell as the 21st fastest-growing entrepreneurial company in America.

Brighton Cromwell, based in Randolph, New Jersey, was founded in 2002 by Rob's father, Bill. The company provides supply-chain-management services, primarily in the defense market. The firm works frequently with the Defense Department, Lockheed Martin and other huge companies dealing with massive orders. Rob is quoted on the [Inc.com profile](#) as saying, "Rather than going to hundreds of different companies for 180 parts, why not go to one company?"

After Bill Van Etten's unfortunate passing in 2005, Rob stepped into the leadership role, but he is not without help. Brighton Cromwell's Director of Finance is Rob's brother, Glenn Van Etten. Glenn is also a UD grad and received a finance degree in 2004. Rob says having his brother around only strengthens the company.

"My brother and I have a great relationship," he says. "He's someone who's not afraid to disagree with me."

No matter the amount of help Rob gets, he still feels the responsibility to make sure the business succeeds. Working long hours, Rob says, goes hand in hand with his attachment to the company especially considering the commitment to his employees that he feels. Regardless, Van Etten would have it no other way.

"To me, it's not a burden," he says. "The advantages far outweigh the disadvantages."

Brighton Cromwell first turned a profit in 2002, made their first million in 2004, and in 2007 their sales topped \$8 million. The company recently partnered with both the New Jersey Department of Labor and the VA Hospital to provide jobs to military veterans. Also Brighton Cromwell has a "Hire Veterans First" initiative for many job openings which is a reflection of both Van Etten's personal and business goals. "I'm here to support the soldiers," he says.

Van Etten's last trip to campus was for his brother's graduation, but his fond memories of Newark keep him curious about what's new at UD. Rob said his fondest memories are simply "walking around the beautiful campus all the time." Rob says he still keeps in touch with people in his graduating class and he has even outsourced work to UD alums. He even mentioned that a reporter from a local newspaper who interviewed him was a fellow Blue Hen.

Reflecting upon his time at UD, Rob says that the most important thing for him was not what he learned from text books, but what he learned from meeting and working with people.

"It's not so much what you learn in school," he says, "but it's more about communicating with people and getting to interact with all different types of people. That's how the business world works."

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