



“The Ice Man” - The Pfizer Colleague & Dad Who Keeps Our Medicines and Vaccines on Ice

Tuesday, December 15, 2020



Meet James. He is responsible for developing the packaging and distributions strategies needed to move our medicines and vaccines directly from manufacturing sites down to various points of use globally (i.e. hospitals, long term care facilities, pharmacies, etc.).

Unbeknownst to most people, all medicines and vaccines require some type of temperature control. Some need to be kept at room temperature, others refrigerated, and some must be frozen. The packaging that James specifically works on is designed to protect our product on its journey, from the moment it comes off the manufacturing line to the time it arrives at its destination.

“There are a lot of elements in moving vaccines, similar to really just traveling in general,” says James. “You just want to make sure that you have the right gear to get to the destination that you're going to and also that you arrive in good standing.”

As the cold chain subject matter expert at Pfizer, James' work is primarily focused on keeping our medicines and vaccines on ice. And for that, he's become known within Pfizer as "The Ice Man."

Finding purpose

James has always wanted to make a lasting impact. He started his career as a social worker, and loved helping individuals and families directly. In time, he realized that with a career in the pharmaceutical industry, his work could touch countless lives.

Now, as he dedicates himself to the most monumental of tasks, James says he and his colleagues have worked around the clock as they recognize the urgency at hand.

But to ensure quality, safety has always come first in his work. "Getting the vaccines and medicines to patients must be safe. If something doesn't work, we take it back to the drawing board."

When James thinks about the speed and scale needed to engineer and develop the right distribution strategies, he credits his own supervisor for believing in his team, and believing in science. "My boss said 'can't be done' is not an option. Whatever it takes in order to get something done—you do it."

Blending work and home

Now remote, James shares how his work and home life often intersect, as his family is home with him too. His children have even become famous internally, with his youngest turning into somewhat of a fixture on his work video calls.

As he reflects over the last few months, James shares it's his children who give him hope. They're the ones who put his work in perspective. Initially, he says he dismissed the comments as childlike awe and exaggeration. But now, he believes that his children, young as they are, just might be right.

"Being in the pharmaceutical industry has allowed me to be able to help more people with the limited time that I have here, says James. "I think we all have our definition of what saving the world means, but I think if anything that I've done, if it helps one person, it was successful."

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