

Paving the Way for Others



Tony Heard

Vice President of Operational Excellence, R&D



It's refreshing to work in an environment where - as engineers - we can stretch, fail fast, learn and grow. Navistar's culture of building trust to fuel innovation and creativity certainly helped me feel supported and encouraged to ask or accept roles that were a bit out of my comfort zone.

After 24 years at Navistar, now in my dream job as Vice President of Operational Excellence for R&D, I'm eager to help others do the same.

We have plenty of opportunities for engineers to try out various roles in the operations I manage - from our vehicle proving grounds in Indiana, to the Advanced Technical Center in San Antonio for truck and bus product validation, component testing, to vehicle hot and cold testing at our facilities in Las Vegas, Nevada, and Alaska, and engineering process improvements at WHQ.

A lesson in "failing fast"

On the road to this point in my career, I certainly have hit some potholes. Those bumps taught me how to become a mindful team member and leader.

One of my most important "fail fast and learn" experiences took place when I joined the International® Trucks [ProStar®](#) team as manufacturing program manager about 15 years ago. Expectations were high for us to build a truck with the best interior and fuel economy.



Put simply, our team failed at the first quality build. Little did we know it would be a game-changer. Once over the shock though, we found our groove. The team bonded on road trips to manufacturing facilities where we got our hands dirty, really leaned on each other's strengths, grew closer, had some fun and learned a lot about ourselves and processes that work. It was a very stressful time - which resulted in a successful vehicle build that launched new aerodynamic ProStar® variations, such as the sky rise and flat roof cab, short bumper to back of cab option and other powertrain selections.

Fueling opportunities to advance your career

Navistar recognizes that we're critical thinkers and problem solvers, and sometimes we fail. That's just engineering and we embrace it.

If you speak up and share what you're passionate about, you'll find many open doors here. Over the years, I've worked to keep my engineering skills fresh while also focusing on how I could contribute to business performance. That dual track helped leadership realize I had the potential to do more.

My career at Navistar began in design on the manufacturing side, but eventually I worked up to management positions. The more I ventured out and shared my thoughts, the more people noticed my "unfiltered view" of our business. Navistar rewarded many of us with promotions and new roles as recognition for our unique approaches to problem-solving and managing.



Mentoring: It's not just for new hires

At an early age, I was lucky my mom saw the value of providing strong role models to help me along in life. I've worked hard to pay it forward ever since.

Raised by a single mom, I'm eternally grateful for all her sacrifices to make sure I had the right influences in my life. She placed me in programs that show African American men in a positive light. I started to see men I aspired to be like - who were strong in engineering and computer science.

While mentoring helped me early on, I've found it's been useful throughout every stage of my career. It's not just for new hires. If there's someone you admire and respect here, don't hesitate to reach out to them. I'm confident they will find time for you.

I had a wonderful mentor who was open to hearing new ideas, trying different approaches and attacking the problem - not the person. That's something that sticks with me today. And it's the type of values-based leadership Navistar encourages.

Mentorship provides a clear route to cross-functional learning and understanding which makes us stronger as individuals, teams and as a company. I volunteer for Navistar's vital mentorship program as much as possible.



R&D: Accelerating the impact of sustainable mobility

We want to bend the curve of carbon emissions as quickly as possible. This is our opportunity to do something good and needed in our world.

Moving forward, Navistar is focused on battery electric vehicles (BEVs) – the cleanest and most affordable long-term solution for our customers.

We’re encouraging R&D team members to dive deeper into zero-emissions technologies and other specialties, through our R&D training curriculum including the new local university master’s in Electrical Engineering Cohort – with 100% tuition coverage by Navistar.

The road to learning – and expanded career options for our engineers – opened even more when Navistar became part of the TRATON GROUP, providing global opportunities for remote/hybrid work and cross-brand collaboration. Connecting with our counterparts of our sister brands allows for sharing ideas and key learnings that are invaluable to personal and professional growth.



Delivering an innovative, safe space for you

Navistar celebrates and respects our differences by providing a supportive environment, fostering a sense of belonging to drive creativity and innovation.

I've seen it proven time and again. It's not just our words, but our actions. We're honing an [inclusive culture](#) where people can be their authentic selves at work to grow and thrive in a rewarding career. That's certainly been the case for me and so many others.

Different thoughts, backgrounds, and ways of producing new ideas will be even more important in delivering vehicles that meet our customers' evolving needs – and their expectations to protect our planet.

I've been impressed with the many tangible ways we nourish a sense of community here. Navistar's Employee Resource Groups are led by employees and open to all. These groups help deepen our sense of purpose and community with opportunities to give back and volunteer, take meaningful action to support marginalized groups, and inspire each other to reach higher. [Our ERGs](#) include a pride alliance, Asian and Latino professional associations, women at Navistar, military veterans group, international community of African Americans, and young professionals.

In the end, Navistar continues to step up its commitment to providing the necessary tools, resources and direction to drive our careers forward. My incredible career here is definitely proof of that.