

**MYSTERY**  
 **RANCH**  
Bozeman MT USA

Product Quality Manager  
Recruitment Profile  
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## **The Mystery in MYSTERY RANCH**

*"The idea was to do something that matters. Not just to build some great stuff, but to build it in a way that made a difference." – Dana Gleason*

At its core, MYSTERY RANCH builds packs for men and women on a mission. MYSTERY RANCH packs are built for folks with a job to do, heading to extreme locations carrying heavy loads. Their customers are their first priority – whether they're on the front line, the fire line, the sickest line or the cleanest line. The team at MYSTERY RANCH thinks through every detail to make sure the gear performs as well as the users do and never gets in the way.

MYSTERY RANCH is built on a heritage of function, comfort, quality and durability. Since 2000, MYSTERY RANCH has been designing and manufacturing packs and load carriage systems for military, hunting, wildland fire and mountaineering customers, with a focus on use-specific designs and hand-built quality. Based in Bozeman, Montana, MYSTERY RANCH is a global brand with worldwide production and distribution.

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## **History**

In 1985, Dana Gleason and Renée Sippel-Baker founded Dana Design, the backpack company that would become recognized as the industry standard in load carriage technology. Dana's ArcFlex internal frame was the first pack system that integrated different kinds of materials to maximize the benefits of each for more effective load transfer. By the early 90's, Dana Design was the pack to own and the name became synonymous with comfort and quality.

At its peak, Dana Design had three full-time production facilities in Montana, over 200 employees, and a global wholesale distribution network. Prompted by the need for capital to expand into wider markets and manage a growing company, Dana and Renée accepted an offer to sell Dana Design to the K2 Corporation in 1995.

After a few years of what they thought would be a skiing- and backpacking-filled early retirement, both Dana and Renée realized they still wanted to be in the business. When Dana's daughter, Alice, asked him to design her a new hip sack, he went back to the design room and found there were still some great packs that needed to be built.

Dana and Renée founded MYSTERY RANCH in 2000; they were officially back in the pack business. The hip sack Dana built for Alice was the beginning of what would become MYSTERY RANCH's patented Lumbar Wrap, and the designs for the NICE frame and SATL would soon follow. Though firmly entrenched in outdoor retail, Dana was approached by the Navy SEALs for custom packs in 2003, and MYSTERY RANCH began a relationship with the military that would significantly alter its business model and design strategy.

Dana and Renée decided to move the company to a direct sales model so they could focus on designing products for specialized customers with a new capacity for customization and rapid prototyping. The feedback from the military and Special Forces users provided a better understanding of what their customers wanted and how best to give it to them. Dana and Renée took what they learned from these relationships and applied it to design and construction of all product lines; regardless of the mission, a MYSTERY RANCH pack is up to the job.

This was a move away from the traditional wholesale model in the outdoor industry, but one that provided MYSTERY RANCH an opportunity to design for high-level customers in military, wildland fire, backpack hunting, and mountaineering. The innovation that followed allowed Dana the creative freedom to push the boundaries of what was possible in pack design and materials technology, while building on his history of designing durable, comfortable, user-centric packs.

MYSTERY RANCH has expanded significantly over the years and continues to grow into new markets. Every product built is steeped in a history of innovation that spans four decades and which is rooted in a dedication to designing the most functional, comfortable and highest quality packs on the market. With both domestic and international sales and production, as well as direct to consumer and a burgeoning wholesale business, MYSTERY RANCH maintains their standard of quality around the globe.

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## **Product**

Great packs don't just happen, they evolve. MYSTERY RANCH packs begin as ideas from which prototype packs are born. These prototypes are then tested on the backs of users who usually destroy their gear. Their input helps to shape several rounds of prototypes until the team at MYSTERY RANCH reaches a product that meets their industry-leading quality standards. MYSTERY RANCH's amazing production team then takes over, with employees dedicated to making the highest quality backpacks available. It takes a designer with a history of innovative pack design and a dedicated team to orchestrate this evolution.

Simply put, MYSTERY RANCH packs are designed to help a person (a soldier, hunter, firefighter, etc.) carry heavy loads with as little strain on the body as possible. To that end, packs are uniquely designed to support unusually shaped and unbalanced loads, like large weapons, firefighting gear, or elk carcasses.

MYSTERY RANCH exists to serve people in the field who have real needs as users, users that work MYSTERY RANCH packs hard every day on the job. Distinctly made to serve a purpose, MYSTERY RANCH currently breaks down and focuses their product into four different categories:

### **Military:**

The military line of MYSTERY RANCH packs makes up half the revenue for the brand. The team works closely with top-tier groups of the military such as all elements of Special Operations Command

(SOCOM), the Marine Corps, British SAS, and the Presidential Guard from the UAE. MYSTERY RANCH packs are well known in military circles for their superior quality and framing technology as well as their specialized design solutions for unique missions.

### **Fire/Rescue:**

The Federal Wildland Hot Shot teams who take MYSTERY RANCH packs with them into the most extreme conditions are, not surprisingly, the hardest users of all the brand's packs. They are used to carrying water and fuel sometimes weighing more than 50 lbs—putting MYSTERY RANCH's load carriage designs to the test each and every time. These packs do not disappoint and are continually sought after by the teams.

### **Hunting:**

MYSTERY RANCH hunting packs are made to handle heavy, potentially awkward loads for the Western Backpacking hunter. Their Guide Light Frametechnology is built to securely hold whatever is being carried, season after season. This customer group is so very accustomed to suffering from the pain of hauling out the harvest and by using MYSTERY RANCH hunting packs, the team hears time and again that these users are experiencing comfort well beyond anything they have ever experienced. The hunting range of packs include a taller frame to provide security for the load being hauled out, be it a trophy mount, meat, or shed horns. The adaptability between frame and bag enable the hunter to carry their camping setup, optics, a weapon, as well as their harvest. Hunting has become Mystery Ranch's fastest growing category as the Hunting community has rallied around the innovative load carriage systems that MYSTERY RANCH is so well known for.

### **Outdoor / Mountain:**

With rapid growth internationally over the last 10 years, specifically in Asia Pacific, the Mystery Ranch Mountain line is beginning to see strong adoption across the globe, including here in North America. While the MYSTERY RANCH brand has become a household name in Japan and Korea, with Dana becoming so popular that he has his own action figure and is mentioned as the guru/samurai sword builder, passing down the backpack craft to other young designers; the brand is also beginning to see traction in the North American wholesale market in both technical load carrying backpacks, as well as urban/everyday styles.

Once again, the most important aspect of the Mountain line is that it is built for the mission. Each pack is made with a specific end-user in mind and with a thoughtful consideration for what is being carried. MYSTERY RANCH packs are built to be exceptionally durable and efficient because they are made for people who depend on their packs in extreme situations and environments.

## **MYSTERY RANCH Culture**

The team at MYSTERY RANCH is youthful in age and spirit. They have been described as well-educated and eccentric outdoor aficionados who crave the expanse of wide open spaces (many are athletes/former pros). It is safe to say that being in Bozeman is a huge draw for MYSTERY RANCH employees. In the summer, everyone is out taking in the endless opportunities for activities like hiking and mountain biking while winters have put Bozeman on the map for the "Best of" skiing and other mountain adventure activities.

An important aspect to note is that everyone on the design and development team has real, hands-on experience, actually putting packs together. In the past, all pack prototypes were hand-made in 3D right on site, a tradition that continues today with the pack designs. There is a deep respect for the quality and functionality of the packs made at MYSTERY RANCH and a true devotion to a pack built for the mission.

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## **Bozeman, MT**

Bozeman might have the feeling of an outpost town but keep in mind it is the third largest city in Montana. It is the principal city within Gallatin County and makes up one of the largest metropolitan area in the state with a combined population of over 80,000 people in the valley. Relocating to Montana hints at a person's desire to get away from the crush of urban life and immerse themselves in the great outdoors; places that don't really exist in many states in this country anymore. Bozeman has been experiencing a rapid population boom over the years as people realize what the wide-open spaces have to offer; it makes city life pale in comparison. Bozeman offers up a bustling hub rich with an international and college town vibe; Montana State University has lured many tech start-ups to the area and is an adventurer's gateway to the true Montana experience. Bridger Bowl ski area is 16 miles from downtown Bozeman; Big Sky Resort is 45 minutes from town. Seven Mountain Ranges are surrounding the area, and world class ice climbing resides in Hyalite Canyon. And the Gallatin Canyon hosts some incredible rock climbing. Fishing on sacred waters to fly-fishermen is literally minutes away from town, and there is plenty of hiking and camping all over the state and region.

Here's a synopsis of the key elements that define the Montana experience:

**Spectacular Unspoiled Nature** – Montana is home to some of our country's greatest landscapes – a place where mountains and prairies come together to create more spectacular unspoiled nature than anywhere else in the lower 48.

**Vibrant and Charming Small Towns** – Peppering their vast, wild landscapes, Montana has many vibrant, authentic small towns that serve as gateways to the state's natural wonders.

Breathtaking Experiences – Montana is a storied place filled with unscripted, off the beaten path adventures. In short, Montana is known for breathtaking experiences by day and relaxing hospitality by night.

Montanans consider themselves:

- Simple but not unsophisticated
- Confident but not arrogant
- Genuine not old fashioned
- Grounded but not stuck in their ways
- We do it our way

If these elements of life resonate with you, and if you are someone who enjoys the great outdoors, Montana welcomes you with open arms.

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## **The Opportunity**

MYSTERY RANCH has built a company with a fierce and loyal customer following. Each MYSTERY RANCH pack is recognized for its quality, functionality, reliability and authenticity. The same terms can be used to describe the team at MYSTERY RANCH as well as the criteria used when assessing new employees at the Ranch. For this particular role, we are looking for a quality person to help in the achievement of quality product. At the heart of this position, we are looking for an analytical, process-driven self-starter who can truly take ownership and pride in the work they do.

The Product Quality Manager (PQM) will manage and direct all aspects of product quality assurance and quality control across the organization. The PQM will drive constant improvement and reliability in the quality of MYSTERY RANCH products through processes to reduce manufacturing and design defects, and effective issue-management and communication to mitigate and resolve quality problems. The PQM will facilitate a close working relationship between the Product Quality and Product Development teams to ensure that all designs are audited for a high level of craftsmanship and quality integrity. He/She will manage a team of Quality Assurance and Quality Control professionals to ensure that all quality specs, standards, protocols, and documentation are thoroughly communicated and enforced; and will collaborate with internal stakeholders and factory partners to manage and troubleshoot non-conformities and future improvement. The PQM will develop and promote a culture of quality throughout the organization and will inspire team members and factory partners to strive for perfect quality every time.

### **ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:**

- Maintain a high level of daily communication with internal & external stakeholders to deliver products that meet the highest possible quality levels.
- Manage a QA Team to translate product specifications into quality specs, inspection instructions, and manufacturing standards.

- Manage a global team of Quality Control professionals and Quality Inspectors to ensure accuracy in quality execution and to monitor and flag non-conformities. Coordinate the scheduling and dispatch of QC and quality personnel involved in QA/QC activities to minimize expenses.
- Design and structure Quality Control reporting and tracking procedures; compile, analyze, and disseminate insightful and comprehensive data and feedback to internal stakeholders and factory partners to inform strategic decision-making.
- Maintain a deep understanding of product requirements, supplier capabilities & processes, and potential failure points to develop and implement effective quality assurance processes to reduce and eliminate defects.
- Review, adjust and establish all quality control inspection criteria, training programs and processes for suppliers, as well as MYSTERY RANCH QC and QA personnel.
- Establish and maintain processes and systems for Raw Material inspection and quality reporting at internal and external manufacturing facilities before and during the production process.
- Travel to partner factories to implement and train on quality assurance and quality control standards. Maintain a system for documenting and sharing information gathered during factory quality visits.
- Work closely with Product Managers throughout the product creation process to provide data-driven insight, feedback, and process recommendations for the successful execution of quality requirements. Provide input and collaborate on amendments to the Fit- For-Use Guidelines, testing protocols, and field testing parameters.
- Maintain a proactive and timely schedule of QC inspections by collaborating with the Operations team and factory partners on WIP status and production scheduling.
- Work in conjunction with the Quality Systems Manager to ensure that all procedures adhere to and comply with ISO:9001 standards and requirements.
- Act as a point of contact for reported quality complaints from the marketplace and the warranty/repair department. Coordinate, communicate and manage projects for resolution.
- Lead and own the quality escalation review process. Oversee product recalls, determine global rework/repair logistics, and communicate vendor chargebacks.
- Manage the ongoing evolution of all quality assurance and quality control policies and processes as they relate to the end-use quality of MYSTERY RANCH products.

#### **CORE COMPETENCIES:**

- Ability to understand and balance revenue and margin requirements against supply chain economics, customer requirements, and brand integrity.
- Ability to communicate and persuade others to pursue a course of action through clear written and verbal communication. Establishes and maintains strong relationships with all internal/external stakeholders to promote open and professional communication.
- Ability to structure and process qualitative and quantitative data and draw insightful conclusions.
- Ability to maintain stable work performance and fulfill deliverables when under heavy pressure or stress.
- Thorough attention to detail. Ability to discern between critical issues and less important issues and prioritize accordingly.

## QUALIFICATIONS:

- Professional, respectful, and positive communication style and demeanor
- Minimum 4 years' experience in a Quality-oriented role
- Strong background and understanding of product specifications and sewn construction techniques.
- Thorough understanding of manufacturing and internal and external quality processes.
- Bachelor's degree or equivalent industry experience.
- Demonstrated ability to effectively lead a team of people
- Ability to travel domestically and internationally – 20%-30%
- An understanding of external certification requirements.

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