

Denise Kelly

Case Study – Careers Pathways.

1. Explain why you decided to do engineering?

I decided to do engineering because after researching the job I found that it does not involve sitting in an office everyday. Engineering includes being involved in the physical manufacturing side of things. Being on the work floor and seeing how things are made is important to me. I wanted to do something that would challenge me; with engineering there is a new job to be completed and a new problem to be solved almost everyday. My older sister also went through an engineering apprenticeship and I watched her become very successful and enjoy going to work. However, during her apprenticeship she was the only female that year completing an engineering apprenticeship. Before she started her engineering apprenticeship I thought that engineering was a job that only men could do because it was a manual job, which I found not to be at all true. After seeing how women are not represented enough in this field of work, it made me more determine to become an engineer and show other females that there is no such thing as a male orientated job.

2. Did you always know that you wanted to progress your career in engineering?

No. In school my best subject was English and I always got the best grade in this subject. So when I left school in 5th year I decided to try journalism. After a year of this I found that it wasn't challenging enough. I also found problems when researching jobs and careers. There are so few jobs for people in the media. I started researching most demanding jobs and engineering was one of the top. The world will always need engineers.

3. What GCSE's did you chose and did this help you?

I did well in the essentials; English and Maths. I choose ICT, Technology and Design and Double award Science as my GCSE's. ICT is an essential for doing an engineering apprenticeship and I was lucky to have chosen that. I find that Technology and Design has helped me a lot because I am using the skills on the work floor that I learnt in Technology, from as simple as using a file to soldering to learning how to programme CNC machines on a daily basis.

4. Did you consider the academic route verses the vocational route (apprenticeships verses university)

It was important for me to make the right decision when choosing an apprenticeship. I found it useful to write the pros and cons of each. In school I always found exams very nerve wrecking, so staying in school and sitting exams then doing more in university was not for me. I consider myself to be more of a hands-on person; I learn better when actually physically doing the work. After taking into consideration the cost of university fees and the thought of being in debt due to studying I decided that studying while earning money was a far better idea.

5. Tell us how your apprenticeship is going (do you enjoy it, what's involved?)

I am enjoying my apprenticeship a lot. I am working for a company called Star Instruments Ltd. The company manufactures pressure gauges. I have been involved with almost every aspect of manufacturing. I started printing dials as my first job experience and have moved around the factory doing different types of manufacturing including working with CNC machines, welding, calibrating electric contact gauges and a variety of other jobs in the machine shop such a drilling, tapping and working with a manual lathe. Although the shop floor is a male dominated area, this does not affect my work at all. I feel working in an area like this has boosted my confidence a great deal and has made me a more assertive person. I find that I am getting the help and attention I need as a learning apprentice. Because the factory I work has not got a huge number of employees, I think everyone works closer as a team. Therefore, I am not afraid to ask for help when I need it because I know someone will always be willing to take time out of their work to help me.

6. What's a typical day for you in work?

Everyday I am doing something different. The company I work for is very busy so there are always jobs to be done. This week I was working in a variety of places. I was learning how to weld stainless steel parts, I was manufacturing electric contact gauges at the beginning of the week and I have been printing dials. Next week I will most likely be leaning a different section of the shop floor. A typical day in work consists of doing something different. I am learning all the time without having to study. I enjoy this because I can never get bored, there is always something new and different to keep me busy.

7. What are your career aspirations? (promotion in work, foundation degree, degree?)

My overall goal is to become a quality testing Engineer. After I finish my apprenticeship, I think the best route to go for is Open University. I hope to do a foundation degree in mechanical engineering. I want to work for Star Instruments for many years and gradually make my way up in this company.

8. Would you recommend an apprenticeship and if so, why?

I have already recommend an apprenticeship to people I know that are still in school and not sure of what to do when they leave. I think an apprenticeship is a great way to develop skills you didn't know you had. The great thing about an apprenticeship is that you are being paid to learn new skills and gain a qualification. I find that since I started my apprenticeship I have gained more financial independence. I am able to buy a car, pay for my own holiday and buy what I want without having to ask my parents for money. While people I went to school with are struggling to get a part-time job and study at the same time and are still depending on their parents, I have independence and a job that I love. Doing an apprenticeship means staying focused which was something I found hard to do in school. You can't sleep in, you can't 'bluff' your work, and you have to prove that you are just as good as people that have been working in the company for many years. I think getting into the reality of work-life was a big change for me after leaving school, but I think it was a changed much needed. I work hard during the week and enjoy being off at the weekend. After coming straight out of school and into a work place one thing I really enjoyed was meeting new people. The age range varies and it is interesting to meet new people, work with people that are not the same age as you and learn their story and how they got where they are today. Finding a job in this economy is not easy for many people, but an apprenticeship is almost always a guaranteed job for life. The company you are working for is paying for your education so if you prove you are a hard worker during your apprenticeship there will be no reason for you not to be guaranteed a job when you finish your apprenticeship. There is never a dull moment in the workplace and I actually look forward to coming to work as an apprentice everyday, something not many people can say.