

Case Study

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My career in food and drink

Stephen Finnie,
European Engineering Project Manager,
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"Every day is a school day! Even after 7 years in the business and developing in roles, I still find time to (and at times am forced to) learn new skills to better myself and add more value to the business."

Q: How did you get started in your career in food and drink?

A: I was applying for jobs after university, and honestly didn't realise that the food and drink industry even needed engineers – I applied to Baxters and got the job as a graduate project engineer.

Q: What was your route to get to this job and what are the entry qualifications?

A: I studied Physics and technical subjects at school and went on to complete a BEng (Hons) in Mechanical Engineer at Dundee University. From there I managed to secure my first position at Baxters as a Graduate Project Engineer. From there I became a fully fledged Project Engineer and now run the Project Engineering team in our European Business.

A degree in engineering subject is a good start, alternatively people who have completed apprenticeships in engineering subjects can move into the projects side of things too.

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Q: What did you study at school and how relevant were the subjects?

A: I studied Highers in physics, maths, English, German and geography; physics and maths. These helped me get into and through university to where I am now. I've used my German a few times to figure out that an engineer from a machine manufacturer didn't know how to fix a problem we were having. They all come in useful at some point.

Q: What does your job involve and what are your main responsibilities?

A: I manage a team of Project Managers/Engineers on a day to day basis and am ultimately responsible for ensuring that the team identify and deliver projects in line with the business priorities.

I spend most of my time doing a few things: managing budgets, facilitating decision making processes and managing the expectations of our stakeholders (people like our CEO and some of our director).

Q: What is the best thing about your job?

The best bit has to be the long term strategic things that I get involved with, I get a real kick out of trying to figure things out that have big impact to the business in the future. From identifying constraints and risks, to

communicating them in a visual manner to my stakeholders. This is absolutely the best bit.

Second favourite bit is my team, they are a good bunch and help me get better at what I do on a daily basis (not always easily or seeing eye to eye!)

Q: Why were you attracted to a role in food and drink?

A: Honest answer is that it was a job that was going at the time and I needed it. I've never left though, which tells me I must love it for some reason or another. I think that there is security in food and drink as people will always need to eat and drink.

Q: Would you encourage others to consider a career in food and drink?

A: I definitely would! I think there are a huge array of skills that are required that almost everyone could find a job within this industry. The people are great. I have made some incredibly good friends over the last 7 years, and look forward to making more in the future.