



My Story:

From a young age I have always wanted to attain a skill set, extend my knowledge as much as possible and earn money whilst doing so. I used to love building with Lego/Knex, using my imagination pretty much all of the time and had to know how things worked. Once I was coming to the end of my Secondary Education, I had to start thinking about what I really wanted to do with myself, and that's when I started to look into Engineering. I'm certainly no brain box that's for sure with 'B's and C's' for my GCSE results and there were so many different routes to go down I didn't know where to start!

It was at this point I decided to ask for different opinions on the routes I could take and what people thought that worked in those different disciplines. I asked Electricians, Mechanical fitters and even some Instrumentation technicians. They all sounded great and I took an interest one way or another in each of them. The next step was deciding on which path I would like to take and how I would get there.

My mum and dad were my biggest supporters (and still are), however, It is very much 'who you know' and not so much 'what you know' when trying to make it in the Engineering world. My mum and dad's backgrounds were not Engineering related in the slightest which made things far more difficult than if they did, so, it was a case of taking all the advice I could get from them, but also taking matters into my own hands.

I printed several CV's and biked to some of the local Engineering firms. Unfortunately, It did not go how I imagined in my head and received no phone calls or feedback from any of them as I waited anxiously by the phone for at least a week. I remember my mum and dad then saying, you need to apply to HETA.

As school was coming to an end and college was approaching fast, I wanted an apprenticeship more than ever, so I applied to HETA. The process was daunting for a 16 year old school leaver, but I took things in my stride and hoped for the best. There were requirements of 5 C's in English, Math's and Science along with achieving a minimum score in several aptitude tests. I had the GCSE results luckily, and had read up on what the tests would consist of. My dad also knew people from his work who's sons had gone through the HETA process, so I had a head start and was able to research the correct material. Again, its who you know!

The day of the tests came and I felt like I had been thrown into the deep end slightly. I had done some research into the 3 different tests, but, unfortunately school doesn't necessarily prepare you very well for them. I wasn't over confident but had nothing to lose. I completed the three tests and felt it went very well. They were a series of Aptitude tests including mechanical reasoning and spatial reasoning. I found the mechanical reasoning far easier than the spatial reasoning as this was something I had only done some research on a few days before at home. Its the way you perceive shapes and how you predict what they would look like further down the sequence but is very confusing if you don't research prior to the test.



I completed the tests and heard from HETA a few days later letting me know I had passed. I was over the moon and was excited for the next step. It involved an interview with the HETA training manager and then if successful, onto the open day where company's from all over the region come to advertise what they do. Your job as a potential apprentice, was to 'sell yourself' the best you could. The whole point is to show the various company's that you are interested in engineering and capable of pursuing it as a career. Company's want to see that you want an apprenticeship and are passionate about it. Not that you are there just to 'see how it goes'. Its important to stand out!

My first year going through this process (just after I left school), I received one phone call from a company who potentially wanted to recruit me. I went down to the plant the next day and was told I had to complete a test. The test, from what I remember, consisted of ten questions that were engineering related. They started easy and got harder as the test progressed. There were several other candidates taking the test in the same room so the pressure was on. I had competition. I handed my completed test form back in and left. I believe it was two or three days later I received the all important phone call. It wasn't the news I was hoping for. I thought it was too good to be true to have gone to the first company, completed the test and managed to get straight in! Things like that don't happen to me so I knew it was too good to be true. Although it was bad news, I was so close. The woman on the phone had told me that i was second in line and depending on whether the successful candidate passes their fitness test, I could be getting a call back. Of course they didn't and I was back to square one. But I didn't let that defeat me. I was the only one to get the last question correct on the test (supposedly the hardest). It was a question on percentages. I was always good with percentages and enjoyed Math's at school so this definitely helped.

I applied to college to complete my Electrical Engineering Level 3 Diploma, I felt that this was the best step to take if I wanted to try again with HETA and have a better chance at company's noticing my interest. Going to a college and doing A levels was not something I was interested in at all as I was always more hands-on than academic. I completed my first year at college and signed up to try again with HETA. This time I received two interviews. One with ABP and the other with a steel company. I had done slightly better in attaining two interviews instead of one, but unfortunately it was another year of bad news. I received nothing. Both interviews had three or four people on the panel, and for a young lad with barely any interview experience, it was scary to say the least.

I continued my Level 3 diploma for the second year of college with my hope of getting an apprenticeship slowly dying. I applied to other company's as well during my time at college, but unfortunately I heard nothing back. I kept asking myself the questions... "what are they looking for?" and "What am I doing wrong?". the end of college was upon me and it was about the time to apply off for my third attempt at HETA. I had gone into the process in the previous two years quite timid and not as confident (if you know me, this is nothing like me) which wasn't helping at all. It wasn't helping me stand out and company's weren't seeing my personality or interest in the field. This needed to change and I started to develop the attitude of 'I have nothing to lose so just go for it'. I can not stress enough how much this benefitted me and the result spoke for itself. I went to the open day for the third and last time with an open mind, confidence and letting my personality show. I received five interviews that year.



I went to three interviews the following week and the other two the week after that. I had some work experience which college had arranged that same week with a renewable energy firm involved with wind turbines offshore. It was safe to say I didn't get too involved with the interesting stuff as they wanted me working with some of the guys installing guarding and railing on the roads outside. Despite this, I had a really great day. It was around 2 o'clock I received a phone call. It was one of the recruitment people from HETA. They wanted to give me the good news that a day after having my interview, the company wanted to sponsor me and take me on. Let me tell you, I had never been so happy in my life. The hard work paid off, the patience paid off, and more importantly, it was the start of my career I had been trying to start for so long. The first thing I did of course was ring my parents to let them know that after three years of being unsuccessful, I had finally found a company that was willing to put their time and effort into helping me pursue my career.

The apprenticeship was multi-skilled (electrical and mechanical). This was one year basic training at HETA and then the last 2 years at the company. If I met the criteria of the three years including NVQ complete, HNC to a minimum of a merit standard and the company felt I was competent, I would be allowed to complete an extra year with a higher chance to be kept on.

I have a lot to thank this company for, not only did they give me the opportunity, but have looked after me for the past eight years. They have developed me into the person I am today and the skills I have learnt, not only within the workplace, but outside as well, are second to none. I cannot stress enough to anybody reading this, whether you are going through the process of trying to acquire an apprenticeship, or even leaving school with an engineering career in your head, don't give up (especially if you get knocked down once or twice), take any advice you can from older and wiser people, always ask questions and don't ever think you're not good enough. If you put the work in, you will absolutely get what you want out of it.

Start your Career now!

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