

“You spend over 40 hours a week working for 40 years so whatever you do pick a job that you that you enjoy and gives you job satisfaction”

Introduction

I have had a long career in highway work which has involved repairing and re-building all roads from the green leafy lanes of Devon to the M5 Motorway. The company I work for has built and maintained roads and bridges for twenty years, during this time it has trebled its' turnover and now carries out building work all over the South West of England.

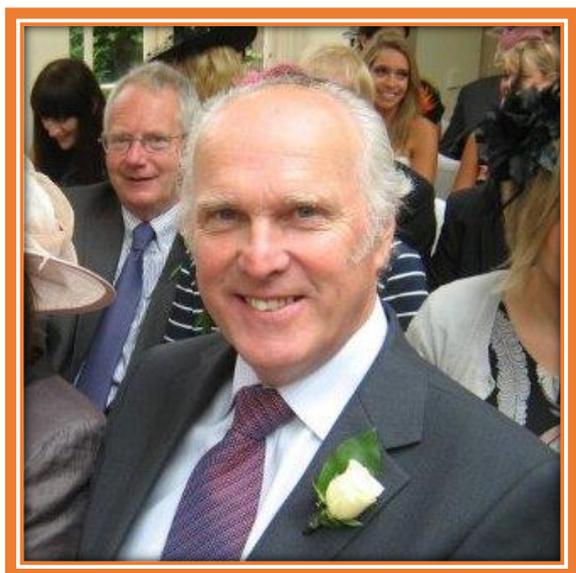


Image: **Steve Guilbert**, Marketing Manager – South West Highways

How did you get started in your career?

Before I left school I always wanted to be a builder and thought that wearing a hard hat was cool, I managed to get a job with a quarrying company, they sent me to Tech College and gave initial training, I then moved to Devon County Council and they arranged for me to attend Plymouth University where I obtained a degree in civil engineering. After some more practical training I became a Chartered Engineer and worked on bridges, retaining wall and all sorts of road schemes.

Can you outline a typical work day?

Now my job involves finding new work and new clients for the company to work for, I read the papers to look for jobs, check out special web sites to check on planning applications and visit consulting engineers to see what schemes they are designing.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Meeting people and finding interesting jobs to discuss.

What skills are important for anyone wishing to start in your profession?

I started from the bottom and worked my way up, if you join a company that has a good record of training up its' staff then you can make a start whatever level you like and they will help you progress. If you want to become a design engineer, then you should be chartered to prove that you are a responsible person. Bad doctors kill patients in one's bad engineers can kill people in hundreds!

What main personal attributes do you think is important for your type of job?

The main attribute I look for is enthusiasm, if you find excitement in constructing things and get a buzz out of standing back and saying “I built that” then you’ll have a great career.

Do you have any tips or suggestions on how young people and adults can enter your industry?

Generally civil engineering can be split in to two sides, designers and contractors, designers are more office based you need to be good at maths and have a good imagination of how buildings and structures carry loads and forces applied to them. Contractors need really practical people who can solve the problems of constructing projects. But civil engineering in build has a very wide scope so there are many career paths to take.

Why is it important for the construction sector to attract and train young people and new entrants?

It is possible to start as an apprentice on the tools and work up to being a project manager. Often the best project managers are those that have had heaps of practical experience. Without engineers and builders, the world would grind to a halt. Reservoirs for water, power stations for electricity, harbours, airports, railways and roads are all built by engineers all of which are essential in our lives.

What trends do you predict for your industry within the next 10 years? E.g. is it a growing market requiring more young entrants.

I believe that there will be a large investment in infrastructure work in the next ten years and we need to train young people to be ready for this, training someone can take four years or more and the requirement for a good workforce may outstrip supply if we don’t train youngsters now.

General words of wisdom

You spend over 40 hours a week working for 40 years so whatever you do pick a job that you that you enjoy and gives you job satisfaction so when you eventually retire you can say to your children I built that!

Further contact/information

Further information on South West Highways and their Apprenticeships can be found at www.swhltd.co.uk

If you are inspired by Steve and would like to get in touch with her, please email inspiringswncs@prospects.co.uk with your enquiry and we will pass on your contact details.