

*"I want young people to inspire me with ideas, not the other way round!"*

## Introduction

Sparex was founded near Exeter in 1965 as a supplier of parts and accessories to the agricultural machinery industry. Over the years the Group has grown and now has subsidiaries in 18 countries across Europe, North America, Asia and Africa. In addition, Sparex has customers in a further 100 countries making it one of the most internationally active companies in the South West. The Sparex Group also has a fully ISO accredited manufacturing division, Spenco Engineering, near Exeter which manufactures high precision machined parts for global customers in the agricultural and automotive sectors. The Group Headquarters are near Exeter.



Image: **Jeremy Burgess**, Group Managing Director – Sparex

## How did you get started in your career?

I grew up on a farm and have always been around farm machinery. After an apprenticeship with a machinery dealer I went to Cranfield University and qualified as a mechanical engineer. I joined Massey Ferguson as a design engineer and progressed from there.

## Can you outline a typical work day?

There is no typical day. If I am in the office there will be meetings with the various functional teams or conference calls with our subsidiaries around the world. We also host visitors from many countries at our headquarters too. My role involves frequent international travel which takes me anywhere from rural Africa to North America or Australia. It's a very varied job.

## What do you enjoy most about your job?

The fundamental nature of agriculture. Ultimately we are part of a huge industry that feeds the global population. The other thing I enjoy is the people, I work with such a huge range of cultures and personalities it is really very inspiring.

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

We have a wide range of roles in the Sparex Group. We need people with agricultural industry knowledge and experience but also people with strong IT skills, analytical ability, knowledge of warehousing and logistics, financial management to name a few.

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

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

Do some research on the sector or company you are interested in which shows interest and initiative. We are looking for people with ideas and energy, not those who want to be instructed every step of the way. I want young people to inspire me with ideas, not the other way round!

### **What career progression opportunities are available in your business/sector?**

We don't have a structured career development system because that is too mechanical. We aim to be more personal and through our appraisal system look to develop a career progression plan on an individual basis. We have almost 500 employees across the world but we are still small enough to treat people as individuals.

### **Why is it important for your sector to attract and train young people and new entrants?**

For any business to grow and adapt to new challenges you have to have new ideas and a fresh look at things. We find that by blending the experience and knowledge of our long serving employees with the energy of trainees we can create a very powerful force.

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

Agriculture is arguably the most fundamental industry on the planet. As world population grows so the challenge to feed that population grows with it. Agriculture is a very resourceful and creative environment and growth combined with efficiency improvements is a certainty.

### **General words of wisdom**

The main advice I have for youngsters' looking to define a career direction is to research and don't be afraid to ask questions. If there is a company in your area in a sector you are interested in then write to them, show some initiative, employers like that, you might be surprised where it could lead!

### **Further contact/information**

If you would like to find out more about a career with Sparex or the parts manufacture and sales industry, please get in touch.

Email: [careers@sparex.co.uk](mailto:careers@sparex.co.uk) | [www.sparex.com](http://www.sparex.com)