

STEM Ambassador - Self Employed Engineer and Materials Expert

What GCSE courses would be most appropriate for a STEM career?

English and Maths are essential. Science subjects are the best choices, but are often seen as more difficult courses in which to obtain good grades. I chose science subjects, but could have achieved higher grades in arts subjects.

What jobs are available in STEM?

You would be able to pursue any career with STEM qualifications.

What is the biggest skills gap currently?

Skills for employment are mostly acquired on the job rather than in school, but there are too few engineers and too many lawyers, accountants shelf stackers, and estate agents in our society today. Where there are too few, there are more opportunities

How did you decide what industry to work in?

Where I was brought up (Wiltshire), almost all students became farmers, soldiers or teachers because it was all they knew, and I had no interest in any of these so decided to explore opportunities in manufacturing, which meant leaving home at 18 to start an apprenticeship in Birmingham.

What is the best industry/field to go into currently?

I don't know, and Brexit will be detrimental to all careers I fear.

How are you dealing with Covid 19? How has the outbreak *affected your job or the companies you work with?*

I caught Covid 19 in April and had recovered by May. The pandemic has reduced trade, stopped me from traveling and has brought forward my retirement.

How long is a shift? Have they differed between the jobs you've had?

I work with the spring industry in a semi-retired capacity offering advice to management and shop floor personnel who usually work 8 hour shifts.

What personality traits do you look for in a successful candidate? Do you have to wear a uniform?

Enthusiasm, confidence and a willingness to be a team player who wears the company logo.

Has this differed between the jobs you've had?

Yes. An interest in my work was always important, but when I was a steelworker I had to wear full safety gear.

What equipment do you use? Has this differed between the jobs you've had?

In all my jobs I have used a computer and measuring equipment.

What qualifications do you need to gain employment in the industry sector you specialise in? Do specific subjects help? What is the minimum wage for someone starting in the industry you specialise in? What is the average salary? How do you find STEM apprenticeships? How many hours is training/academic work? How much is the starting salary for a STEM apprentice? What opportunities do you know of that STEM organisations provide for young people?

Many questions here, but in the spring industry in the UK there are about 100 different companies.

Nearly all train new starters and encourage apprenticeships often on day release to college, and a minimum wage to start with. Progression depends on how quickly you learn and work within the team. Some company owners and managers are STEM ambassadors so that they can attract interest in their company making it easier to recruit when they need new staff. Employment in the spring manufacturing industry is in slight decline in UK and Europe, but is increasing in China, India, Mexico, Canada and Brazil.

Do they offer virtual work experience? Can you be over qualified for a job?

NO, but websites will tell you a lot. www.jbsprings.co.uk has educational material typical of what employees are expected to know. I wrote some of this website.

What do you look for in a successful job application? Is having top grades and no work experience better or worse than having mediocre grades and lots of work experience?

Those with top grades should continue their education at University. At school I got B, C and D at A-level and went on to Leeds University after starting my apprenticeship. Those who believe University is not for them would be encouraged to pursue an apprenticeship. Having no qualifications is rarely a path to success in life!