

Making a Difference in the Engineering World

SETA has been creating, developing and supporting incredible engineers for over 50 years and we're immensely proud of that heritage.

Let's meet one of our former apprentices...



April Lancashire

Engineering Manager
at Aquila Nuclear Engineering

An apprentice at SETA in 2007/08

Employer at the time:
Gravatom Engineering Systems Ltd

Tell us more about what you do at Aquila Nuclear Engineering

Although my job title is Engineering Manager, my role now leans more towards engineering management, operational & delivery excellence. I task manage a team of up to 10 engineers on an equipment modification for nuclear applications project for Sellafield. I work in a very collaborative way, liaising with the customer so that we deliver the right solution first time. I'm also responsible for the apprenticeship programme at Aquila; I believe it's of the utmost importance to ensure the next generation are given good apprenticeships.

Why did you choose the apprenticeship route?

My route to apprenticeship wasn't conventional. I went to college and almost finished the first year – it wasn't for me. I was highly academic but the only reason I did as well as I did with my grades was because my dad paid me to get good grades. Because I did well at school, the natural (and recommended) route was to go on to college - I wasn't told about apprenticeships. After almost a year, I realised I needed to find another pathway and left college (to my parents' very vocal disappointment).

I found out about apprenticeships via Google whilst trying to mitigate my parents' palpable disappointment, stumbled across SETA's aptitude tests so I signed up to do them, not really knowing if this was truly what I wanted to do. I did extremely well on those tests so I was contacted by a number of prospective employers for interview. I accepted an apprenticeship with Gravatom (another nuclear engineering company).

What were your most memorable or standout moments at SETA?

My more memorable moments are now, walking back into the same building I started my career in, hoping to help others on their journey to success. I learned the fundamentals of engineering which gave me the basic principles going onto the workshop at my employers.

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What did you do when you completed your apprenticeship i.e. what was your route to your current position?

I've had a number of different roles as I've progressed in my career. Largely, I've grown and learned from each one which has acted as a series of stepping stones to where I am now.

I started as a Junior EC&I Engineer, then went on to become an Assistant Controls Engineer, a Controls Engineer and a Senior Controls Engineer. The engineering management, operational & delivery excellence aspects came organically with my skill set.

Management wasn't originally in my plan, however again this is something that has organically grown overtime & I manage the biggest team of people at Aquila, ranging from apprentice to principal both electrical and mechanical.

What have been your greatest challenges and how have you overcome them?

When I started in the workshop at Gravatom, it was a male-dominated environment and I was the first female there. I had a challenge to change people's perceptions – so I did by representing myself & capabilities in a positive manner changing their perceptions.

Engineering is one big challenge, I see every day challenges as part of the job and I enjoy dealing with them. It suits my skill set to deal with deadlines, requirements, structures, etc.

What have been your greatest successes?

Being respected in my field. For example, I presented at the most recent Hot Labs Convention this year, a global conference for world-wide nuclear hot cell R&D facilities which enables leading experts to come together, collaborate and share best practice.

But day to day success are also important to me such as making someone feel better about what they do, hitting deadlines, mentoring and coaching, positive feedback from the customer and recognition of excellence within the business of project deliverables and processes.

What advice would you give to anyone trying to find their path to a great career?

Figure out what your natural skill sets are and investigate careers that will exploit rather than suppress them.