

My Step Experience – Engineering

An insight into engineering success! – David

David, a Mechanical Engineering Graduate from the University of Southampton, gives us a step-by-step account of his journey from new graduate to his first weeks on the job in his Graduate Mechanical Designer Internship with L.B. Foster Automation, a very successful global engineering group.

Despite studying engineering for four years, and being confident I wanted a design (and/or R&D) role within engineering, whenever I was asked what it was I actually wanted to design, I could never provide an answer.

Consequently, I spent the summer enjoying some time off and researching what exactly it was I wanted to do next. I applied to a number of graduate roles that I felt matched what I wanted, but the majority didn't start until the following September. Anxious to not rest on my laurels and gain the engineering experience that I lacked, I turned my attention to finding a more immediate role, which is when I discovered Step.

After regularly checking the website for new opportunities, I found the role that would eventually become my internship. After updating and tailoring my application, I received a call from the Step team. A short chat later and my application was sent across to L.B. Foster.

A couple of weeks later I excitedly travelled to Nottingham for an interview. After a successful first interview I was invited to attend a second interview the following week and deliver a brief design proposal. Immediately after my presentation and a quick tour of the company, I was offered the internship; I started in a month!

Without any previous engineering work experience, I wasn't sure what to expect. My first day started with a meeting with my Line Manager, Paul, who once again took me around the company and introduced me to everyone. Shortly thereafter, I took up my place in the design office. The remainder of my first week was fairly quiet, which in hindsight was a blessing in disguise as it allowed me to reacquaint myself with CAD software, work on some design modifications and technical drawings, sit in on design meetings and get used to the company's methods and procedures.

Come my second week, I was set my first project: I was tasked with updating an old machine design, tidying up the machine's CAD model, converting the old drawings to the company's new templates, and modifying parts. As my internship progressed, my level of responsibility increased, until I was tasked with multiple projects, designing machine modifications to meet customer requirements, and arranging in-house manufacture of parts.

My internship allowed me to both develop my engineering design skills and gain an invaluable insight into the work of a successful engineering company. Overall it was a great experience, and I would like to thank L.B. Foster and Step for giving me the opportunity.

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Personal Development and Industry Experience – Andrew

Andrew, an Electrical and Electronic Engineering graduate from the University of Plymouth, tells us about his Graduate Electronic Designer Internship for an established business working in the bioscience sector.

Andrew has since moved into a permanent position with the company.

Andrew attended the University of Plymouth as a mature student with a background in auto mechanics. He also enjoyed sound engineering and electronics and worked on many of his own programming and micro-processing projects. He then made the decision to go to university to study Electronic Engineering. He registered his details with Step whilst still studying and when a role calling for a Graduate Electronic Designer became available we contacted him with the details to see if he wanted to apply.

The internship was being offered by a globally-renowned bioscience company, specialising in the design and development of products for the IVF industry. As part of their business they also have a team of multi-disciplinary engineers in software, mechanics and electronics, who create the unique range of hardware behind their research.

Within three weeks, Andrew had been interviewed, and had been offered a place in their engineering design team. Having recently come to the end of his internship, Andrew has been offered a permanent role within the company, and this is what he had to tell us about his placement:

“My Step internship has been a great way of being introduced to the industry and to experience being an electronic engineer in a design team, from working individually to working as part of a team and interacting with other departments within the company. The specialist field for which the products are developed keeps the work varied and interesting and there is always much to learn and many areas in which personal development can be achieved. The project that I had been working on was suited to my area of interest within electronics and one in which I had aimed to specialise in the future. My time with the company has opened up the opportunity to employment, and developed my experience and career.”

Putting Theory into Practice – Hanif

Hanif, an Electronic Engineering graduate from Queen Mary, University of London, tells us about his Automation and Electronics internship with a market leader in electronic test equipment. He has since been taken on permanently in the role.

After graduating with a MEng in Electronics Engineering 2.1 Class (Hons), I jumped eagerly into applying for jobs within my chosen field. For whatever reason I just couldn't secure a position I wanted and soon found myself in roles like IT and teaching. While I was still practising and keeping up to date with all things Electronic Engineering, this never felt enough. I wanted engineering to be my career not just a hobby. I had almost given up hope, but in the midst of applying for a PGCE I got a call from Step

I had applied for a 12 week internship as an automation and electronics engineer. I had endless help from Step with the application process and then later with the interview. It went really well and I instantly loved the environment of the workplace. I found that the company really appreciated my passion for electronics and automation and I was delighted I got a response within a week of the interview. The position turned out to be really satisfying for me as I was given the freedom of exploring my knowledge learnt during university and applying it to real life automation projects.

The company is a market leader in electronic test equipment, offering complete solutions for rental, new and refurbished instruments through to total equipment management. They supply over 8,000 different product lines all over the world with big names in electronics and industries within the aerospace, automotive, defence and telecoms sectors.

I was allowed to get stuck in straight away with calibrating equipment automatically using software tools and using my own experiences/skills in automation, whilst learning the key practical skills and further theoretical knowledge of the job. It was well worth the wait, and the role allowed me to be hands on and practical. I enjoy putting theory into practice, so it was rewarding to be working, week in and week out, on different projects from optics, power supplies, multi-meters, network analysers and signal generators. I even got the chance to use my other skills and experiences within the workplace i.e. IT issues, software and PC diagnostics. I feel really valued within the company as shown by the importance of the tasks that they have given me. Furthermore, since the end of my placement, I have been given the opportunity to stay on! I now greatly look forward to being given more responsibility and continuing to work with experienced engineers.

Step is highly recommended; they will recognise your talents and help you to find the placement that you really want. Also I'd like to add a special thanks to my manager and supervisor at work for their support and recognition.