Casess Study

Johnston Sweepers
Sweeping away engineering stereotypes

Johnston Sweepers is doing much to brush away engineering stereotypes by promoting the role women increasingly play in its workforce.

The company has been manufacturing road sweepers in Dorking, Surrey for more than 75 years, exporting over 70% to more than 80 countries, helping to keep city streets clean from London, Dublin, Paris and Milan to New York, Moscow, Melbourne and Bangkok.

Johnston Sweepers, which employs 450 people at Dorking, is now working closely with the Semta Apprenticeship Service to support the company invest in its future workforce.

The company has a long-established history of recruiting apprentices. There were 22 in place in March 2016 with a further intake planned for later in the year.

Whilst not specifically targeting women, the company is keen to see more talented females become engineers.

“With today’s skills gaps and our current location in south east England, recruiting is a constant challenge. The recruitment and development of our apprenticeship scheme is seen as an investment in our future for long term strategic gain. Semta have been instrumental in recruiting our 2015 intake and continue to support our existing apprentices in all aspects of their development.”

Sandra Mackrell
HR Officer, Johnston Sweepers

“Our Manufacturing Manager responsible for our Welding apprentices is an accomplished female welder,” said Sandra. “Our recruitment methods seek to encourage and welcome any and all applicants, embracing diversity within the organisation.

“The company employ an increasing number of female employees ranging from Apprentice to Senior Management. One of the ways we promote careers in Johnston is by showcasing our female role models as great examples of women in Engineering.

“The relationship between Johnston Sweepers and Semta is relatively new and is gathering positive momentum. To date our relationship is positive, open and honest. They have been instrumental in recruiting our 2015 intake and continue to support our existing apprentices in all aspects of their development.”

Rebecca Houghton, 22, from Reigate, went to study maths at Brighton University having gained A-Levels in Maths, Geography and Computing an AS level in Physics. She soon realised it was not what she wanted to do, and with encouragement from her family, she left higher education to embark on a four-year apprenticeship in welding and fabrication.
Rebecca said “I found out about the apprenticeship after seeing it advertised in the local paper. I decided after leaving university that I really wanted to do something more hands-on, and my dad encouraged me to go for the interview. There are lots of benefits of doing an apprenticeship instead of higher education, as you are earning money as you learn instead of acquiring large amounts of debt, and you learn more practical and work orientated skills.

“Johnston is very supportive, as there is always someone to help if needed, and they offer good opportunities. Semta come in to visit regularly also, making sure we are not struggling with our work, and assisting in any way necessary. I would advise other girls that jobs in engineering are great as they can be very challenging but rewarding, combining practical and intellectual skills. There is a wide range of jobs in many different fields.”

Nicole Fisher, 20, from Dorking in Surrey is an Apprentice in Logistics and Purchasing.

“I first saw the apprenticeship on the National Apprenticeship website,” she said. “I was intrigued by the idea of manufacturing products right from the very beginning, until the end and further. Being part of a process is mainly what inspired me.

“One of the main benefits of an apprenticeship is getting paid while you learn. However, there are so many more advantages. You get to communicate and build relationships with your teachers at college and the workforce around you. It allows you to gain knowledge from experienced employees and to feel like you are making a positive contribution.

“I am due to finish my apprenticeship in 2018. I would like to do further education and hopefully secure a job in which I make a good and positive contribution to the company.

“Semta support us in our reviews, and give us a chance to express any doubts or thoughts whether it is to do with inside work, or whether you have got a problem outside.

“Although engineering is not the most glamorous career, it is probably one of the most interesting ones to be involved with. So do not knock it till you have tried it, because you could surprise yourself just like I did.”

Semta Apprenticeship Service has the capabilities to
• identify your business skills needs
• develop tailored apprenticeship programmes
• source and secure all the available funding
• recruit the right apprentice for your business
• source market leading training provision
• deliver ongoing mentoring and support
• provide independent assessment, awarding and certification.

One of Semta’s expert team of Apprenticeship Advisers can come and visit your business, or simply talk over the phone to assess how we can support and advise you.

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✉️ customerservices@semta.org.uk
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