Dave spent the first year of his apprenticeship full-time at college, followed by three years day-release from his employers, Adwest Driver Systems, where he worked in the machine shop, setting up for production runs, and the tool room. Following a year away from studying, and once again supported by his employer, he then followed a BTEC National Certificate in Mechanical Engineering as an evening course at his local college.

Starting the apprenticeship suited Dave's desire to learn a trade and the knowledge that he did not want to continue learning in a school environment.

Continuing to study was important to Dave as he wanted to progress in his career, and achieving an HNC enabled him to secure his current role as Mechanical Workshop Supervisor at the University of Leicester.

Supported by the University, Dave has since gone on to further studies in engineering and is currently pursuing an MSc in Rapid Product Development while continuing to work full-time. Dave has also completed NVQ level 3 and ILM qualifications in management to support his more senior role.

Dave takes his studies one step at a time, but doesn't rule out the possibility of moving on to do a PhD. In the meantime, he hopes in the future to have a technical manager's position with a higher level of responsibility and to continue developing links between the departments of Engineering and Physics and Astronomy which he has developed as a result of his MSc studies.

Dave would recommend apprentices who want to move on to higher-level study to give it a try and take it one step at a time as there are plenty of part-time opportunities available.

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James left school aged 16 unsure of what to do next until a careers adviser suggested construction management. At the meeting, he heard about a training scheme in Wellingborough, looking for 6 Apprentices to help turn a factory into a block of flats. The scheme, set up by the East Midlands Housing Association in conjunction with Tresham Institute and Moulton College, gave James an opportunity to first try a career in plumbing, bricklaying and carpentry before choosing his Apprenticeship.

After trying out different career options James chose to study a Level 2 Apprenticeship in Bricklaying at Moulton College, he enjoyed studying whilst working as he “learnt so much by doing the job” and could apply what he learnt at college immediately to his role. This experience and qualification helped him land a job at Jeakins Weir, a construction company, operating throughout the country. Formed in 1973, they cover three main areas: general contracting, repairs and maintenance and property development.

James “always wanted to be a manager” so he moved on to his Level 3 Apprenticeship and with support from Jeakins Weir he began to build his experience at work by assisting Site Managers. This experience convinced him he would be a good Site Manager and led him to choose to study BSc (Hons) Construction Management following completion of his Level 3.

James recently graduated with a 2:1 from the University of Northampton and describes studying for his degree as a great opportunity to “meet people from other industries related to construction” and helped build up his skills and knowledge of construction. Whilst studying he was promoted to Site Manager which he loves and is hoping to progress one day to a Project Manager!

Although at times studying and working full-time was hard work James has enjoyed every minute of it and is considering undertaking a post-graduate degree to help with his future career.

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