

Learner Case Study

Construction and the Built Environment

Mick's Story

Mick left school in 1981 with five O levels and started work as an apprentice electrician at a company in Halifax. This was a JIB apprenticeship and lasted until he was 21. The work involved high quality work in hospitals, schools, and police stations etc. He enrolled at Leeds College of Technology (Known then as Kitson College) studied on a part time day release course and passed the City and Guilds Electrical Installation Certificates at Part 1 and Part 2. Although he wanted to progress to the C Certificate (part 3) he didn't because his company wouldn't support him and he would have to take a day off work without pay, something he couldn't afford to do.

He changed companies a couple of times, but still working in the contracting industry with most of his work being away from home. In the late 80s, he worked for a company who specialised in electrical installations for the leisure industry where again, most of his work was either away from home and during the night. Through this company, he completed short updating courses, but again was not allowed to continue on the main stream courses.

He left that company in 2004 when he was given the opportunity to link up with his former contracts manager from his previous company. This person had set up an electrical contracting section within a successful heating and ventilation company (Hevertech) which was expanding. Things started to change for Mick and Dave Horkan, his new manager supports FE and HE, expecting and encouraging his employees to go to college and study. He recognizes the importance of keeping up with current legislation and investing in the future of his employees which he hopes will eventually benefit the company as well as the employees.

Mick completed and passed the City and Guilds 2391 Testing course and in September 2006 he started on the HNC in Building Services. Because Mick had not completed main stream education for 20 years, he found it strange going back into an academic environment, although he does say that all the lecturers and other students put him at ease immediately.

Within the course he completed a work based learning project which gave him the opportunity to study a certain aspect in depth of the work carried out by his company. He chose to study the Minor Works and Testing department of the company. This gave him the chance to study and analyse where any improvements could be made. He presented his project and the full facts and findings to his company in a legitimate and comprehensive manner. The ideas that were presented was taken on board by his company and implemented, making the department more of a professional and profitable section of the company. This was a sign that Dave Horkans idea of investing in his staff was starting to pay for itself. Within the last year, the section head has retired and Mick has been promoted to the post where he is working with full confidence.

He attributes his success to his studies at HE level. Four years ago he was an approved electrician working as a normal electrician on projects. He is now a department head, who has also qualified at Qualifying Manager status from the NICEIC.

A direct quote from Mick is,

“The way I looked at it was that it cannot do my career any harm to do higher education and that if I turned down the opportunity I may regret it later and never get another chance. It may not be immediately beneficial to your career but the fact that any qualifications and study skills you gain are with you for life”.