

FIND *your* FUTURE**Arjun Sharma****Job title:** Graduate Engineer at Bechtel Civil Infrastructure**Role:** HS&E Support for London City Airport Expansion**Graduation date:** 2017**Degree:** MSc Civil Engineering**Tell us about your current role and organisation**

My project role was assigned to me as part of the Bechtel Graduate scheme, which involves 6-9 month role rotations within a project to gain exposure of the different functions of a project. Bechtel's involvement in London City Airport (LCA) began in June 2017, and HS&E was establishing its procedures during this time.

My role involves working closely with the HS&E manager, and the HS&E team with the day-to-day reactive activities of HS&E. I initially began contributing my technical (IT) skills to the day-to-day of my team. This evolved to me being given responsibility and the opportunities to develop dashboards, spreadsheets and innovate new means of presenting HS&E data to the rest of the project, which is where the majority of my time is spent in a working day.

What motivated you to go into this sector?

After my MSc Civil Engineering from UCL, I was not sure whether I wanted to work with a designer, a contractor, or a delivery partner. I had spent work experiences with Balfour Beatty and other smaller contractors and overall enjoyed the site-based experience, as well as the literal building aspect of contractor work.

What do you think helped to set you apart from other candidates?

I was selected for many interviews; with designers such as Turner and Townsend and Atkins, who were polite and informal, but ultimately let me down. Other designers such as Arup, AECOM, Mott MacDonald did not pass me through the application stage. Contractors such as Careys, Skanska and Balfour Beatty interviewed me but did not accept me, all due to my "personality not suiting a site environment".

My interview with Bechtel was unlike any other interview I had: It was brutal. The answers I gave were well-rehearsed on the train journey into London, and my style was confident, as with any other interview. The project manager and delivery manager of LCA both interrogated me ferociously, and I couldn't help but feel unsettled and rattled. Feeling confused, I left the office and returned home.

A month later I received the job offer. A month after joining the project I asked the delivery manager why he interrogated me, why he accepted me despite the traumatic interview. He said that he saw the grades, the university, the modules, the “polished” interview answers and a bright-eyed university student, and how he wanted to “see me broken”. It sounded crazy at the time, but I see what he means now. Bechtel is a great fit for me as every person in our team is an individual. My delivery manager wanted to see me break out of the shell that I’d been moulded into throughout my education, because he saw greater potential in my personality than what was written on my CV.

What does a normal work day look like for you?

A typical work day for me is doing data analysis for a variety of areas in HS&E. I developed the HS&E Dashboard for the project using Power BI and Excel. The dashboard presents issues and inspections data that the field engineers collect on site, and showing it to the PM’s and delivery manager. I also assist the environmental engineer with noise monitoring spreadsheets and other tasks, as well as creating “how-to” guides on how to do processes on Word, Excel, Aconex, Power BI etc. for the team once I move on to my next role.

What are the best things about working in your role?

After my first few tasks, the team respected my creative ideas and my ability to build them. It is advantageous for me to be on the team - I am learning H&S processes on-the-job every day, as I do not have any prior project examples in my head like others do. The team describe the concept and I am allowed to think creatively and come up with my own idea for what they want, then edit and develop it with their comments. This also means that I am free to work to my own standard, and I enjoy this immensely.

What are the biggest challenges?

HS&E is always seen as a policing role; the animosity between construction teams and HS&E teams are present in every job. The biggest challenges are trying to work in collaboration with the construction team to achieve the same goals. It is a challenge, as it doesn’t happen automatically. Trust and understanding needs to be developed first, and this boils down to the effort of the individual and how much you can do to help each other. Other challenges involve making sure that project teams and contractors provide the information and data that we require.

What advice would you pass on to a student interested in this type of work?

My current supervisor says that the three most valuable traits of my personality to the projects are:

- 1) Ability to integrate with the team
- 2) Dedication and commitment to getting work done
- 3) Ability to understand what is being asked for and being able to deliver it.

These aren’t skills that are necessarily “taught” at school or university, but are just as valuable in the workplace as a degree. I found myself narrow-mindedly focusing on my coursework and exams during my MSc, but had it not been for the interview style of Bechtel and the inspiration that I am more than a technically able engineer, I would still have that narrow field of vision.

Focus 100% on what you’re doing, but take the time to reflect on it in the future.