

FIND *your* FUTURE**David Gance****Job title:** Technical Sales at Pinnacle Power**Graduation date:** 2016**Degree:** MSc Environmental Systems Engineering**What did you study at UCL and what is your role now?**

I studied an MSC in Environmental Systems Engineering at UCL. For my undergraduate degree, I completed Civil Engineering at the University of Birmingham, where sustainable construction and renewable engineering modules propelled me in to thinking about applying to UCL for further study.

I now work for Pinnacle Power. We develop district energy systems, specifically district heat networks, creating decentralized energy infrastructure for mixed use residential developments primarily. We are also involved in designing and operating biomass power stations, providing green electricity to the National Grid.

Our flagship heat network is Greenwich Peninsula, once fully built out the development will be one of the largest residential district heat network networks in Europe, supplying the heating needs of around 15,000 homes as well as restaurants, shops and other retail spaces.

What does your role include?

I primarily work in the commercial team and my role is centred around responding to tenders and working with developers. My role typically includes bid writing and formulating commercial frameworks for potential projects, completing high level design solutions such as the type of energy sources to use to generate heat for the site. Typically, this would be a CHP engine or heat pumps.

Further along the line we would determine the price that residents would pay for their heat, like a normal utility bill with a fixed charge and a unit price (p/kWh) for heat used by residents.

We also test and commission equipment, ensuring designed heat networks are installed correctly. Once the solution is adopted, my involvement in the project winds down, and the operations team comes in. We like to get involved in as much as we can, if I know the site from bid stage, it's very helpful to be there all the way through to the beginning of operations.

How did you get into this sector?

I used to work for the Building Research Establishment (BRE) doing construction materials testing, but I wanted to do something in the renewable energy space and energy provision. I also wanted to work in infrastructure, but I didn't want to be on site all the time, so this was a nice balance.

What was the application process like?

I did the classic sending your CV and cover letter, and going through the usual application process for previous roles. For my present job, I got in touch through a recommendation, sent my CV, had an interview and then a confirmation interview.

Finding a job through networking is not to be dismissed as long as it's targeted to a role you can see yourself fitting in to. You can get a much better feeling about a new role judging by the people that you've met that work there. It is obvious for employers when you apply somewhere if you actually want to work for them, or if you just want a job and you are not quite sure where or why.

What would a normal work day look like for you?

I would usually come to the office, see what's going on regarding different bids, if any bids are due in quite soon, we would be working on that. If not, what external clients have contacted us regarding work moving forward, what sites are currently in that transition stage and dealing with requirements that are relative to the site.

What are the best things about your role?

It's good to be facilitating what we think is the future of energy infrastructure, but it's also very enjoyable learning about new technologies that we are implementing, and the design element of building a bid is very interesting, you are actually deciding how it is going to run, how big it is going to be, or what you are going to put in it.

What are the worst things?

The in-between stage between knowing you will start construction or operations and starting. I didn't appreciate how much contractual work and overlapping responsibilities there could be between contractors. Sometimes it can be a little overwhelming.

What advice would you give to someone looking to get into this field?

Properly think what you want and what will put you on the right road to achieving it. All work experience is valuable work experience, even if you don't think so at the time, and will help push you there along the way.

Roles aren't very specific, you don't only do one thing, so be prepared to be open to doing different tasks. A lot of it comes down to how you deal with people, so appreciating that if you can engage with someone on a discussion base, then you will be able to do very well, is important.

Asking the right question is perhaps the biggest piece of advice, a surprising number of things can be learnt just by asking. Most of it integral to how things work in practice and is knowledge that isn't delivered from lectures.

If you ask questions and show your enthusiasm it will come through. Don't go for a job that you aren't genuinely interested in, as you probably won't get the job, or if you do, you won't enjoy it.