

Case Study



Name: Matt

Served with: Royal Air Force

Company: Siemens

Role: Project Engineer

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Leaving the military was a difficult decision; I had served 12 years in the RAF and travelled all over the world, having great times whilst doing it and challenging myself. However, having children and a family, I found it incompatible with family life, as I wanted to be there for my family, not half way across the world on deployments.

I was due to leave the RAF on the 11th February 2016 and had absolutely no idea what I wanted to do; I had served as an electrical maintenance engineer. Initially I had an interview with Mars UK to work in a dog food factory, having got through the interview and despite being turned down I knew this wasn't for me.

So one thing to take away from this is do not be afraid to go for interviews it is all good experience, the one thing I would stress in interviews is to be yourself and draw on

practical experience. Do not try to be false and say things you think the interviewer wants to hear. As ex-military you will have a wealth of experience and ability to change, to suit any environment. Health and Safety is critical in the rail industry and everything we do has to be covered by task briefing/ work package plans, so a tip for any interview stage is to show that you have a good understanding of Health and Safety and how you would react to a change in the working environment.

The Siemens policy is "The 4 Steps":

- Be fit for work;
- Always receive a briefing;
- Report unsafe events or conditions; and
- Stop if anything changes.

Simple common sense is a major asset, there is no rank structure out here and everyone is expected to speak up if you think it is not safe.

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Back to where it all began for me, I was looking through the right job website and the position for trainee team leader with Siemens was on the site as well as test and design, I decided to apply for the trainee team leader position. About a week later I received an email inviting me to come down to Siemens at Chippenham for the interview day.

I had no idea what to expect as my previous interview with Mars was a strange affair, I initially had to do a finance presentation which to me had nothing to do with electrical maintenance (I assume to push me out of my comfort zone), so I was hoping the interview with Siemens would be more focussed on my technical experience.

On the day the initial briefing was in the classrooms and gave an overview of the business and the industry, then onto the interview stage. The interview for me lasted about 2 hours which was very surprising as I managed to talk all the way through and answered every question drawing on everything I had done over the 12 years with the RAF. What I recommend to do at any interview is to ask the interviewer questions. You have to get a clear picture of what you will be doing day to day and make sure it's a fit for you and the company.

I have to say the way the interview was carried out was excellent as it put me at ease and flowed extremely well. Following the interview stage we were asked to take part in a few technical challenges as a group.

At the end of everything that day I went home hoping I had done well. I also had another interview earlier that week so I was waiting on two responses. The interview had been on the Monday and I heard back on the Friday afternoon that Siemens would like me to enrol in their six week training programme leading to a job at the end of it. I accepted and I was told to arrive at Chippenham to start the course on the 9th November, I had just started resettlement leave on the 6th November so perfect timing for me.

It was a gamble as everything goes through your mind. What if I were to fail any exams, would I be removed from the course? However I had nothing to worry about. I got my head in the books and flew through the exams, a bit of hard work always pays off.

I started with Siemens on the 4th January, based in Manchester as a trainee team leader. I have been involved in three major commissionings in that role. It can be physically difficult and there is a lot to learn but, if you have previous trade skills, you will pick the job up a lot quicker. There is always plenty of opportunity for overtime as the scale of the projects that Siemens carry out is huge.

After 14/15 months in the role I knew that I wanted a change. I wanted to progress and do something different. In the last 3 weeks I have moved into a project engineer role (on secondment), the good thing about Siemens is if you feel that you would like to progress and better yourself then there is plenty of opportunity to do that.

Currently I am based in Manchester working with other disciplines to bring projects to a successful conclusion in the Manchester Rail Operating Centre. I'm still learning the processes and the amount of abbreviations are unbelievable, it is like learning a new language but I am getting there. My aim is to secure a permanent contract as a Project Engineer, hopefully this year.

So, in conclusion, if you are reading this you may have decided to apply for a Siemens role - so good luck and don't be afraid. Ask a lot of questions, don't limit yourself to your previous role in the military. Ex-military have a lot to offer companies, punctual, self-disciplined etc.

Of all the candidates who attended the Military2Rail course I believe only one has moved on. If it is Siemens, you have picked the right company to work for.

