



# Nick Garthwaite

## Managing Director Of Christeyns UK



### **Please tell us about the company you work for and your role?**

Christeyns UK is a chemical company based in Bradford, although we are a global company with our headquarters in Belgium. In the UK we also have plants in Warrington and Whalley Bridge serving different sectors of the hygiene market. For the purpose of the ICE partnership, our involvement is from our Bradford operation. Here we produce chemistry for commercial laundries, that includes healthcare, hospitality and catering. We have a team of around 120 people in Bradford and over the last few years have focused very strongly in creating a people focused culture in our company with particular focus on adjusting the age demographic with our apprentice programme.

I have the honour of being the managing director for the company, a position I have held for 10 years now, a mechanical engineer by profession but have been involved in sales and general management for many years now.

### **Have you worked with schools/colleges/university or young people in the Bradford District? If yes please tell us what activities/programmes your company has been involved in?**

When I first joined the company 10 years ago there was hardly anyone from the younger generation in our team. So in the last few years we have made a distinctive change around introducing apprentice programs and bringing in young interns/students. We currently have our first degree apprentice doing a chemical engineering degree at the University of Bradford. All these changes have now led us to be able to have a more balanced aged portfolio throughout the company. One of the most important things we have been involved in is with Bradford Manufacturing Week, this event focusses on manufacturers and schools working together to give young students work experience, factory tours plus in-school activities such as CV writing, interview skills.

As a company Christeyns has contributed to working with schools/colleges, we also try and encourage work experience throughout our company helping to create more opportunities. Although this may be difficult now we are planning more virtual tours/ experience for the future.

Why do we do this, Why Bradford Manufacturing weeks, it's very simple, I was fed up of hearing that "younger people don't want to work, they don't want to get involved". This is not true in my experience so we created this model which works well, making it easy for the manufacturers to engage with schools, dealing with any barriers such as Health and Safety which just makes it so much easier for manufacturers to bring young people into their companies. Last year around 5000 young people had some kind of interaction during Bradford Manufacturing week. We know that some participants have gone on to become apprentices as a direct consequence of their involvement with Bradford Manufacturing week and they will no doubt have a great career in manufacturing.

### **Does your company offer any opportunities to young people such as apprenticeships/work experience/internships?**

Within Christeyns, every apprentice starts off with our foundation apprenticeship which runs for either one year or two years depending on your qualification. This is a great opportunity for the apprentice to visit all departments and can help them form ideas of where they might want to end up in the future.

The foundation apprenticeship is very important as how many young people really do know where they want to go? It's an opportunity for them to gain experience. Further at the end of the experience provided they have passed all aspects they will have a permanent job opportunity.

A good example would include our youngest apprentice who was sixteen years old when she joined us and now two years later she is doing an additional apprenticeship. Two years is a good grounding but more specialised focus is needed in order to be able to decide what career path you want to take, but even then we know people can make wrong decisions, that's fine, the important thing is to understand that this can happen and change direction.

The application process includes an online application, through the government website. We do ask that applicants apply using our on-line application process, it gives us a chance to read more about the individuals and allow us to make more informed decisions. This works for us and for the applicants, gives them the flexibility to be portraying their character and why they feel like they are the right person for the job. These are the short listed and the selected people are given an interview.



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**What advice would you give to a young person aspiring to be in similar roles? Do you have any advice for potential candidates?**

**What do you look for? (Tips to stand out)?**

Firstly, I would say you have to pass those all important exams, we look for good qualifications for maths, English & science. But more than that we do look for those people how really have some character and spirit, and those who do more than just school work e.g, they might help out in a charity, or be involved with one of the various youth programmes that exist today, a good example being the Duke of Edinburgh programme. You MUST create a CV that is filled with honesty and with those things you do that make you stand out from the crowd.

It is important to research the company you are applying to work for as well as be able to say why you want to work for that company. As interviewers will do all we can to put the candidate at ease and encourage them to open up.

They always say "you only have one chance to make a good first impression" so it is important to take advantage of that.

The characteristics I personally look for in a potential candidate are their immediate, impact on me. On first instinct it would be their appearance, it's clear to see when someone has made the effort and really wants the job. They need to be prepared, bring a pen & paper to make notes, it shows you are interested. Always make sure you ask loads of questions. Make sure you are prepared in every respect.

**Are you able to offer support to local schools and students and if so what type of support can you offer e.g. employability workshops, tour and talk, CPD (continuous professional development) for teachers?**

Yes we do a lot of work with CV writing, careers workshops. This heavily links to the work we do with Bradford manufacturing week.

**Lastly based on your experience did you have any major pitfalls which you would describe as a learning experience?**

This is a really interesting question, I'm nearly sixty four years old now but I can still recall receiving my A-level results in 1975, I failed them all, no one to blame apart from myself, just didn't work hard enough – a big wake up call.

With this setback I then decided on completing a mechanical engineering apprenticeship ending up with good qualifications ( some with distinctions!) from this route which has led to quite a successful career

The point being, You are allowed to make mistakes, its perfectly fine. I have made others over the last forty years or so but you learn from them.

If I can give a simple analogy, it's a bit like driving, the small rear view mirror in the car can tell you where you have been but the large windscreen in front of you gives you the view of where you are going, so looking back is fine but look forward – the view's great!