

Zoë Hatton



We are delighted to feature Zoë Hatton in our first spotlight. Now a Manufacturing Engineer, Zoë is part of a company whose mission is to transform the industrial landscape, using a software-first approach and the MasonOS platform to strengthen critical industries. Zoë shares her fondest memories of life at Queen Elizabeth's and offers fantastic insights into a career path that combines precision engineering with cutting-edge technology.

Can you give us a brief overview of your current role and what a typical day looks like?

After QE I completed a Master Degree in Mechanical Engineering at Imperial College. Now I work for a start-up setting up factories to support production for the UK's critical industries. A typical day is pretty varied for me as I wear a few hats due to the nature of being part of a small start-up team. I work on optimising the processes in our factories, monitor the quality of the parts we produce, review the financial performance of our factories and work with the factory owners to ensure they are operating efficiently. I like that in our factories we turn a lump of metal into parts that go to space or into an MRI machine - it's great having hands on tasks as well as logistical problems to solve.

Which teacher or subject had the biggest impact on you, and why?

From Years 9 to 13, I spent a lot of time in the Design and Technology Department for the FI in Schools competition. The likes of Mr Harvey and Mrs Butterworth gave up much of their Wednesday evenings and weekends to help myself and the FI in Schools team prepare for the competition. It was during this time that I first learnt about technical management - managing our team and the competition deadlines as well as coping with stress when inevitably things didn't follow my perfect schedule! It's also where I first experienced the pride of achieving success in something we worked really hard for.

Were there any extracurricular activities or clubs at school that helped build your confidence or skills?

At QE I engaged in a range of extracurricular activities such as the school plays, the rounders team, Dungeons & Dragons club, Debating Society and FI in Schools. Other than FI in Schools, I was not particularly great at any of these, but I believe that taking part in a range of activities provided me with a wide skillset. In my career, being a well rounded individual has proven more fruitful than having a couple of stand out skills.



If you could go back and tell your 'Year 7 self' one thing, what would it be?

It takes some people a long time to realise that what you think of yourself matters more than what others think of you. It can feel easiest at school to try to fit a mould of what is 'cool' or what could make you more popular - after school, in my experience, it's neither of these things that makes you excel in life or brings you real happiness. Being your authentic self is what matters most, your uniqueness is what makes you interesting. Don't stop doing the things you enjoy to fit in with the crowd, it's boring everyone being the same.

What was the ‘lightbulb moment’ when you realised you wanted to pursue this career path?

I never really had this moment - and I think lots of people don't. I took the approach of trying to keep as many doors open as possible. I tried to do well in a range of subjects and at A-levels did maths, physics and economics - leaving doors open to the sciences and social sciences. At uni I was diagnosed with dyslexia so it now makes sense why I choose numbers over words! There are loads of jobs out there that you don't know about at school - I didn't know what a Supply Chain Manager or Business Consultant was and now they're both careers that I've considered. My advice is to keep as many doors open as possible and remain curious.



What is the one achievement you are most proud of so far?

At university I co-founded a Women in Mechanical Engineering Society. At uni there were only a handful of women in my degree, the society focused on creating a community for these women and supporting the new students when they joined. We also did outreach in schools and raised money for female education around the world.

What advice would you give to current QE pupils who are unsure about their future career path?

Don't just think about subject matter, think about what kind of environment you will excel in. Do you prefer working in teams or independently? Do you like the idea of being a big fish in a small pond or a small fish in a big pond? Do you want to have a lot of responsibility or is that stressful? Do you prefer being in a high or slow paced environment? I know that I enjoy working in smaller companies where I have a lot of ownership over my work (even if stressful at times!). If I was doing the exact same technical work at a larger, slower moving company I know I wouldn't enjoy my work as much.

What do you think is the most important skill for a young person to develop in 2026?

It sounds so easy, but the ability to identify a problem, say you're going to fix it and actually fix it - no distractions or excuses. I guess this can be broken down into being proactive, having perseverance and a strong work ethic.