

## **Work Experience: My Reflection**

**By <Student >**

During my work experience at <company>, I was fortunate enough to have experienced firsthand and learned, many different sides of what goes into a project, the general process of how a project is initially planned, developed and completed; as well as how much work and detail goes into every stage. Another valuable lesson I have learned during these 12 weeks, were the many different types of work an Engineer has to perform, which in turn, have provided me with more insight into the different types of roles and responsibilities that I could perform, as a Civil Engineer.

Reflecting back to my first day at <company>, it was one of the most memorable days of my time at work. After being introduced to everyone, I was handed a tender to work on, in which they had asked me for recommendations to improve certain aspects of the project wherever I see fit, as well as my opinions on the project as an entirety. They were very open and happy for me to contribute as much as I wanted to, and were open to any suggestions and ideas. This instantly made me feel comfortable and definitely made me feel as though I was part of the team.

During the first week of work completing the tender, I was overwhelmed by the work and the responsibilities that were placed on me, but with the help of my supervisors and the directors, who have had years of experience in the industry, I felt more confident and supported as I knew my work would be double checked and any uncertainties were explained. By observing and learning from them, I managed to pick up tips and learned different types of skills, from learning to communicate and deal with other companies, to reading and deciphering many different types of plans.

Working on tenders for the first few weeks was enjoyable for me as it did make me use all the techniques I learned at University in every stream of Civil Engineering that had been taught to us, namely; Geotechnical, Structural, Hydrology and Transport. I realise this might not be the same everywhere and usually Civil Engineers might focus on one type of stream, but I was happy that I had the opportunity to use all of my theoretical knowledge and applied them to real-life situations.

Through experience and observation, another valuable lesson that I learned while working at <company> was that in projects, especially when working in primary stages of certain project, things can change very quickly and dramatically. Another lesson I learned through this was that if there are any uncertainties, from whether a survey was off by a few millimetres, to if materials chosen for a certain aspect of a project were unsuitable, it always has to be checked numerous times and from senior level sources before any conclusions can be made, especially if they are to be presented to a client.

I found that the workplace itself was relatively diverse from what I had observed working at <company>. There are surveyors, project supervisors/managers to civil engineers all working in the one office. This large range of people have different strengths and qualifications and they work together and organise their work in sync with one another so that work flows and they are able to complete their work efficiently in order to present it to the client on time. This in turn, manages to help the workplace become better as team and therefore creates a good atmosphere in the working environment.

The work that I had to complete varied day-to-day depending on what project was about to begin, or what tender was due. Some days were quiet, and during these days I would usually create general documents that the company needed to update, such as forms (working at heights, working in confined spaces etc) and made sure that everything else in the database was up to date ( White cards, Plant Operator Cards and Medical checks). This helped me learn more about the company as a business itself and I felt like I had an input into the development of the growing company.

There were many days that were busy where a tender deadline had to met or a client might need something completed urgently, and these days were stressful to the point where there were times I did have to stay back to get the work done. This in some ways reminded me a lot of my late night study sessions at university and how even in the workplace, it did not change.

Throughout the few weeks I also had the opportunity to obtain a 'white card' (or construction induction card) in order to be allowed on site. This is another aspect of Civil Engineering which I was glad I had the opportunity to experience. I had the opportunity to go on site onto the M80 Ring Road with senior civil engineers and labourers. My responsibilities were to locate underground services and ensure that any area that was to be excavated were free of any optic fibre cables, networks, pipes, etc. This was probably the most enjoyable part of my entire work experience at <company> because I felt uplifted to get out of the office after weeks of crunching numbers at a desk, and to actually see the work that I was working on in theory, brought to real-life. This helped me to understand just how important each stage of a project really is.

Overall, my work experience at <company> was positive. I was very happy with the amount of things that I have learned and experienced in the 12 weeks of being a Student Engineer with the company. I believe that Victoria University should keep this aspect of the Engineering course as it does provide students with the experience needed in order to find a job later on (even if the experience is over a short amount of time). Also, it can be very beneficial as it could lead to a more permanent position, which is what happened with me. I ended up learning a lot more than I thought I would be able to in the time span, and my hard work paid off as they offered me a job at the end of it. I am so happy, and proud that I have completed my course, and I can now graduate and call myself a Graduate Engineer.