



What do employers look for – Martin, Textile Centre of Excellence

Lorna: "What do you look for 'a young person who wants an apprenticeship?"

Martin: "Ah, it's less so about what I look for and more what our companies look for. Particularly in our sector the biggest issue for our companies is just finding the candidate who is prepared to put in the hard work."

Lorna: "Uhum."

Martin: "They don't have to be an A* student in some areas. We just want candidates who are prepared to turn up on time, who can put the work in, who are prepared to develop and create a niche, a career for themselves in the industry. Some of the best shift supervisors and managers, and fashion designers, and sample technologists came from my type of background. One or two NV, er one or two GCSEs and developing through a career structure programme like an apprenticeship. That's the best thing for our company, it's working with them at the young age to work and develop them in the mills."

Lorna: "The mill. What examples have you of things young people should do on their application forms?"

Martin: "Erm, that's an interesting one. Er there are a number of things they should and shouldn't do. Er I'll do a couple of things that they shouldn't do, which we see a lot of. Which is er ridiculous email addresses..."

Lorna: "Yes."

Martin: "...for applications."

Martin: "Er and particularly grammatical errors in, in CVs and covering letters. The big thing for us, and that's why here we offer a screening process for a lot of candidates. But one of the big barriers for employers is initially they see a, a very very strange email address and then a number of errors in the applications. That's a barrier to a lot of 'em. What they should do for me, and what we offer here is the ability to have somebody check that before they apply for positions."

Lorna: "Okay."

Martin: "Er I've done that for a number of candidates here, which has worked particularly well."

Lorna: "Yeah."

Martin: "But keep it short and succinct you know. We don't need six pages of a covering letter telling us everything that candidate has done for 10 years..."

Lorna: "Yeah"

Martin: "...we want headline articles on why they can add value to our businesses. And from that our companies can tease out some of the de', key details."

Lorna: "an what about interviews as well?"

Martin: "We offer, erm, here particularly a structured interview in a variety of ways. Er while we're not always looking for candidates who've got previous experience but in interviews we would expect people to be formally dressed. We would expect punctuation to be high up on the agenda. Er and the ability to have done some homework beforehand for the companies that they're looking to work for. So even if that's a simple web search on their website, making sure that you are recognising what that company does, what they might manufacture and how you can add value to their operation."

Lorna: "So during the application process, are there tests candidates need to go through when applying for available posts in textiles?"

Martin: "Erm we have a mixed approach to engaging young people through the application process. Er there isn't a set test as such, although we do do colour blindness testing. We want to be able to make sure candidates er who are going to be working in dye houses or places where colour matching is important have got the necessary abilities to do that. Er but what we tend to focus on more than anything is buying in to the person rather than their academic background. So we do more on self-assessment analysis. So we get them to recognise their skills in maths and English, and IT, and science to some degree. And we will work with them then to identify the most closely suited position based on their background, their skills, elements of their academic knowledge but more importantly, how we think they will fit within the organisation."