

SEMBCORP EXPLAINS WHAT WE LOOK FOR IN EMPLOYEES AT MAJOR TEES VALLEY CAREERS EVENT



Gerard Armstrong explains his route into the energy industry to the assembled young people watched by left to right: Zoe Lewis, James Lees, Bill Scott OBE, Frances Hoy and Ben Houchen.

Almost 100 students actively considering their future careers got a superb appreciation of the variety of opportunities available on their 'doorstep' at a major event held to coincide with National Apprenticeship Week.

Sembcorp was one of four companies invited to attend the Meet Your Future Boss careers event at Middlesbrough College organised by the the Gazette media company as part its Invest in Teesside campaign.

Gerard Armstrong, head of Sembcorp's newly formed merchant and retail team and someone who was born, raised and still lives in the area, shared a platform with Frances Hoy, HR director of car parts manufacturer Nifco, James Lees, marketing director of pay-per-click digital marketing firm Mabo and Bill Scott OBE, founder and CEO of of the Port Clarence based Wilton Engineering Group.

Also speaking passionately about opportunities in the area were Zoe Lewis the Principal and CEO of Middlesbrough College and Ben Houchen, the Mayor of the Tees Valley who has established a new Tees Valley careers service.

Gerard explained that at 18 he had no idea what he wanted to do but, being good at maths, thought he would be an accountant. However, his 25 year career in the energy industry has never seen him work in a finance team, but instead has led him into a variety of roles that have taken him to almost every continent in the world.

He emphasised to the students the fundamental importance of good maths, english and science skills in gaining employment, but said that Sembcorp also looked for people with the right “can do” approach and with the potential to move into senior leadership roles.

“We are very proud of the fact that 7 of the 9 members of our operations management team came through the apprenticeship route and went on to earn and learn, studying for university degrees part-time sponsored by Sembcorp.”

In simple terms he explained the role of the Sembcorp Merchant and Retail team in buying gas and carbon and selling electricity.

Current members of his team had a variety of backgrounds including people with qualifications in engineering, mathematics, computer science, business, economics and one person even having a degree in philosophy!

He said all needed to be extremely numerate as they spent most days dealing with figures, but it was equally important that they understood the physics of the Sembcorp power producing assets and the associated transmission systems in order to figure out how to bring revenue into the company.

Gerard explained how the pace of change in the industry, particularly with the move away from fossil fuel derived power to other forms of low carbon energy, meant the business could never stand still.

New technologies and digitalisation were changing everything and throwing up new challenges that needed to be overcome to stay ahead of rivals.

At a global level, he explained that the company was involved in the development of projects looking at advanced analytics, optimisation and automation of its processes and developing new concepts such as a ‘virtual’ power plant. It was also using artificial intelligence (AI) to predict when the market would most need its power.