

Alistair Smith MSc CEng FSOE FIPlantE

CASE STUDY

“Being one of a handful of Chartered Engineers has given me recognition and respect among the executives, my colleagues within the business and, most importantly, our clients.”

Education and qualifications: MSc PG Dip BSc (Hons)

Which Institution are you a member of? Fellow of the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) and the Institute of Plant Engineers (IPlantE), Member of the City and Guilds Institute (MCGI)

Current job title: Head of Engineering Technical Services

Company: Bureau Veritas

Length in current job: 7 months

Approximately how many staff are employed by your company? > 1,000

Where are you based? Didsbury, Manchester

Please describe your current role:

I head up Engineering Technical Services (ETS) at Bureau Veritas. The company works with clients to assess their operational needs and provides solutions to improve their organisations’ productivity and overall performance. My department assesses operational health and safety risks, working closely with clients to service their needs and ensure that they have confidence in the safe and efficient operation of their plants. ETS is quite a unique branch of the organisation as it is equipped to provide technical support to the client for the entire life cycle of equipment from feasibility and design verification, procurement, construction, operations, change of owner and end of life.

My work involves leading a team of specialist engineers and technical consultants covering a range of disciplines, including lift escalator and moving walks; crane and lifting; machinery; local exhaust ventilation; non-destructive testing; and pressure systems. My team ensures our services are delivered in the most efficient way through testing, inspection, certification achieved by assessment, on-site inspections and imparting technical advice. My team supports the business in the UK, Europe and globally on behalf of clients as well as developing new business opportunities.

Please provide a brief outline of your career so far:

I joined the British Army, Royal and Electrical Mechanical Engineers (REME) as an adult entry technician in Bordon, UK, in June 1989. I progressed into my first management role in March 1995, where I was responsible for a team of five engineers. I then held a wide range of management positions within engineering and operations, before being selected for the REME fast track engineering scheme Artificer.



After 20 months of training, in March 2001, I held my first Head of Department role as an Artificer Staff Sergeant Weapons, maintaining a multi-disciplined team of fifteen, providing equipment support to long range artillery equipment, the BAe AS90 platform. On promotion to Artificer Quarter Master Sergeant in April 2004, I held a number of roles line managing a military/civil servant Inspection and Compliance team. This was followed by a deployment to Afghanistan in June 2006 and promotion to Warrant Officer First Class (WO1) Artificer Sergeant Major (ASM), as a Technical Operations Manager.

Returning to the UK in March 2007, I assumed roles as WO1 (ASM) Head of Engineering in a UK satellite communications establishment and then WO1 (ASM) Head of Operations in Germany, supporting bulk fuel operations. I culminated my military career back in Afghanistan in March 2010, as WO1 (ASM) Equipment Capability Project Manager.

Since leaving the service in 2011, I have held senior engineering positions in waste and green energy company Fomento de Construcciones y Contratas, SA (FCC), before joining Bureau Veritas towards the end of 2015 to head up their ETS team.

Have you worked on any unusual or high profile projects?

I have worked on many high profile projects within the military, but recent projects of interest include the construction of a mechanical biological treatment plant while working for waste management company FCC Environment.

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I remember one of the first hazard and operability (HAZOP) meetings, which was attended by a number of international original equipment manufacturers, engineering consultants, and representatives from both the safety, health environment, and quality (SHEQ), and the construction, design and management (CDM) teams. We all worked together to ensure that we had considered and made provision for preventative maintenance before the build began. This preparation is vital as it is too late if you can't gain safe access to a 50kg electric motor after the plant is finished, so making sure we had a sound design was paramount. That was a challenging project, but it was great to see any snags being resolved at these HAZOP meetings, before construction began.

What spurred you to work towards becoming registered as a CEng?

REME invests in training and achieving competence, which is recorded in a Potential Development Record (PDR) binder. Originally it was a home for certificates and transcripts, but as time progressed, I would get my PDR signed off to prove competence. Becoming a Chartered Engineer has always been my goal, it is an internationally recognised professional title and almost all our key clients require it in their terms and conditions. It also opens up other opportunities. In time, I wish to apply for [EUR ING](#), as we are an international business and this would demonstrate to the global industry that we never stop developing as engineers.

How did you become registered as a CEng?

I was enrolled onto the excellent Gateways Scheme run by Aston University. For its MSc Professional Engineering programme you have to write a Professional Development Audit to analyse where the gaps are in your own competence. The University assigned me a mentor from my professional engineering institution, the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE). I then worked through the modules, some of which mandatory and some chosen, using work-based projects to demonstrate competence against the UK Standard of Professional Engineering Competence ([UK-SPEC](#)).

How has professional registration as a CEng benefitted your career?

I think for my appointment at Bureau Veritas it gave me the edge over other candidates. I also support SOE by sitting on their Membership and Professional Standards Committee so that I am giving something back. In addition, I'm a Professional Review Interviewer for prospective Chartered Engineers and I've also just recently volunteered for the SOE Military Committee, providing that liaison between the military and industry.

What advice would you give someone considering professional registration as a CEng?

Log all your engineering activity, take pictures, keep emails and get your managers to sign and verify your involvement in projects. Always get involved. I've learnt so much by putting my coveralls on and getting stuck in. If you aren't fortunate enough to be sponsored for a Masters, there are other options to achieving CEng. Engage with your institution and find out what opportunities are available.

What is your employer's attitude towards professional registration? Were they supportive while you were working towards professional registration as a CEng?

Both my previous and current employers have been fully supportive and recognise the benefits of professional registration through the return of investment they are getting. The number of courses I have attended to build on my knowledge is extensive. Bureau Veritas, as a business, actively encourages the professional development of their employees and for them to become Chartered Engineers. This inspires more engineers to follow a similar career path.

How does your company/clients benefit from you being professionally registered as a CEng?

As a CEng, Bureau Veritas benefits from my extensive plant engineering, construction, project management skills and my continuing professional development (CPD). Being one of a handful of Chartered Engineers has given me recognition and respect among the executives, my colleagues within the business and, most importantly, our clients.

What are your future goals?

To remain within Bureau Veritas, establish a solid grounding in my business function, and to achieve EUR ING.

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Registered: 2015

