



Press Release

ebm-papst encourage the refrigeration engineers of the future

ebm-papst, Europe's leading manufacturer of fans and motors, were at the Big Bang Fair, which took place between 10-12th March, showing schoolchildren how a career in the refrigeration industry can be exciting and rewarding.

At the Big Bang Fair, which is the largest celebration of science, technology, engineering and maths for young people in the UK, engineers from ebm-papst, Kurt Bruns and Stuart Axcell, were on the 'Cool Science' stand, run by the AB Group in conjunction with the Institute of Refrigeration (IOR), to answer questions about refrigeration to schoolchildren aged seven to 18, from across the UK.

The 'Cool Science' stand aimed to get more schoolchildren engaged with refrigeration and the science behind it. On the stand included two bicycle powered cooling systems (the bicycools), a rowing machine powered cooling system, a ball juggler demo unit provided by ebm-papst and a series of dry ice experiments led by the 'Mad Science' team, among other attractions.

Chris Vallis, from AB Group and Founder of Cool Science, organised the stand at the Big Bang Fair with the aim of getting more young people involved in the refrigeration sector. Chris says, "It's estimated that there are approximately 70,000 people working in the UK cooling industry – it's a huge sector. However, we suffer from the same symptoms as the whole of the engineering sector, in that we have a skills gap, and I believe young people are who we need to be talking to, to plug that gap."

He continues, "We should be encouraging young people to continue studying STEM subjects and making them aware that they can train in this field. For example, they can now take up an apprenticeship under the new apprenticeship standard from 2017 in Refrigeration and Air Conditioning, which is government approved. We hope to maintain the momentum with Cool Science to continue this work. Hopefully after seeing what we have managed to achieve in 2015, industry support will grow to help Cool Science continue to move forward."

At the exhibition Kurt Bruns and Stuart Axcell spoke fondly of their engineering careers and how they got into the profession, with both following different career paths before joining as engineers at ebm-papst. Kurt started his career in engineering following five years with the army in the Royal Engineers before joining a small heating firm where he gained a Higher National Diploma (HND) after studying part-time. Stuart took a more traditional route of college and university where he took an engineering degree before working full-time as an engineer and moving into air conditioning and refrigeration.

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Kurt says, "I had no strong interest in engineering at school and only thought about it as a future profession when I gained first-hand experience of engineering in the army. It's true that people do require some form of qualifications, either a degree or a diploma like myself, to become an engineer, but my story shows that there are different routes into the profession."

He continues, "The aspect of engineering I enjoy the most is the process of talking to someone about a problem they don't know how to address, generating an idea as a solution and then implementing this solution. Engineering is often about problem solving which is something that children can relate to inside and outside of the classroom."

Stuart says, "I've always been a practical person that wanted to know exactly how things work, which lends itself perfectly to engineering. Also most of my family were, or currently are, involved in jobs related to engineering or fixing problems so it seemed like a natural career path for me to pursue."

He continues, "As an engineer day-to-day you always have multiple requirements to consider and need to use multiple disciplines like science, maths and practical engineering to help solve these problems. If you have a scientific mind and enjoy solving problems then engineering is ideal."

Kurt and Stuart both agree that engineering is such a broad industry term, with plenty of flexibility to move between different roles. For example, Kurt was installing solid fuel heating systems before moving into heating and ventilation at ebm-papst while Stuart was working as an engineer for an industrial laundry company.

Stuart says, "Engineering can be anything from practical roles where you're fixing problems in systems to more technical engineering where you're using science to develop better products to improve the lives of everyday people. The good thing about working at ebm-papst is that you can get involved in lots of different aspects of engineering and work with different companies that all have different requirements."

However, Kurt and Stuart both believe that more young engineers are needed in the industry, with the Big Bang Fair acting as an excellent starting point in getting children engaged with refrigeration and how it relates to their lives.

Kurt says, "Twenty per cent of the energy used in the UK goes towards refrigeration. This figure highlights the need for more engineers in the industry to provide innovations and improvements to the designs of systems, so they are more energy efficient in the future."

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Stuart says, "The Big Bang Fair was excellent in engaging schoolchildren with the science behind refrigeration, which is often referred to as the biggest industry that you've never heard of. Very few people understand how refrigeration works and not a lot of people necessarily think about it, but so many things need refrigeration, from big data centres to your fresh vegetables.

He concludes, "If you have an analytical mindset with a genuine interest in how things work then engineering could be the perfect career."

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