



APPRENTICE CASE STUDY

ROBBIE BIRD,
METALFORM INCORPORATED LTD

Kevin Gardner, Managing Director of Metalform Incorporated Ltd, has nothing but praise for apprentice Robbie Bird. "Robbie came here knowing nothing about engineering and accepted he had to start at the bottom," Kevin says. "He's come on leaps and bounds and is a valuable member of the team. I'd love another apprentice like him."

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THE BUSINESS

Birmingham-based Metalform employs seven people and has three working directors. It is a successful business that modifies and reconditions machinery and parts for the fastening industry and offers plenty of scope to train apprentices. "There's so much variety in our work that it's an excellent opportunity for any apprentice to develop skills," Kevin comments.

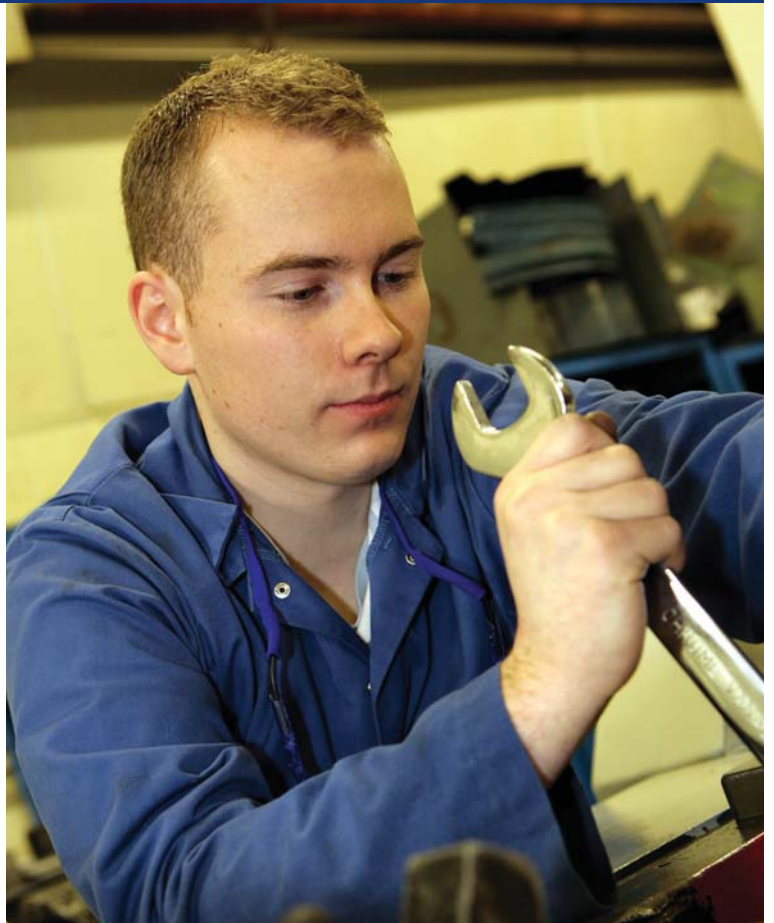
THE APPRENTICE

Robbie was keen to take the opportunity and prove his worth. His GCSE results were "not very good – mostly Es, except for CC in science," he admits and puts it down to lack of motivation. After school he went into a hotel job with no training and no prospects. "It was just a job and not what I wanted to carry on doing," he says. When he joined Metalform, aged 18, his life quickly changed. "Since starting my apprenticeship I've gained that motivation," he says. "I enjoy what I do, my work is very varied and I've got a good career path ahead of me. I'm extremely happy with my apprenticeship and want to continue to learn and get as many skills and qualifications as I possibly can. It benefits me and my company."

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Robbie, now 22, has a string of qualifications to his credit. Displayed above his workbench, his certificates mark his achievements and impress customers. He has also developed high-level fitting, machining and assembly skills by learning from the experienced people he works with. Although he is doing a mechanical engineering apprenticeship, his employer put him on an intensive electrical engineering course so that he can help out the electrician in the factory.

Having gained City & Guilds certificates, Robbie is now doing a BTEC National course as a bridge to a part-time Foundation degree, for which he has the full support of his MD. "I'm taking things one step at a time," Robbie says. "But I don't see why I couldn't go on and do a full degree." Quite an achievement for a school-leaver with grade E GCSEs.



COMPANY BENEFITS

MD Kevin Gardner says: "While Robbie's learnt with his hands mechanically, we've learnt from the skills and knowledge he's gained from his college work. Because he's computer literate he's been able to guide us in IT as things are moving faster and faster in that industry. We've invested in a CNC machine and Robbie went on the training course for it. When I or my fellow directors have got stuck, he's come along, sorted the problem and got a programme back on track.

"Robbie's time-keeping and attendance are excellent and his college results have been marvellous. We're very pleased to sponsor him on a Foundation degree: his enthusiasm, motivation and attitude have earned him that opportunity and we'll benefit too."

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