

Meet the Young Ambassador

This month, *CIA Matters* meets with recent winner of our 2015/16 Young Ambassador Award, Lee Griffith of BASF, to talk careers and find out more about the plans in place for his year as leader of our Future Forum...



Q Lee – you will be the face of the Future Forum over the next year. For those that don't already know, what exactly is the Future Forum?

A The CIA Future Forum is a network of people from many different backgrounds at the beginning of their career within the chemical industries – enthusiastic individuals that are willing to exchange opinions, share knowledge and push forward new ideas to contribute to a sustainable future for the chemical industry. Members of the Forum are involved with CIA Strategy Groups which focus on the matters of Chemicals Management, Communications, Employment, Energy, Trade & Competitiveness and Responsible Care. *If you're a professional working in the Chemical Industry and would like to make a positive difference, get involved by joining the 'CIA Future Forum' group on LinkedIn!*

Q What does your role as Young Ambassador involve?

A First of all I am very proud to represent the CIA as Young Ambassador. *My aim for this year is to give confidence to the industry that the current generation are ready to take the baton and deal with the future challenges that we will face.* The Future Forum is the tool to form the team we need to deliver great achievements.

Q What do you see as the biggest issues facing the Chemical Industries at the moment?

A There always have and always will be challenges that the industry faces. In recent years, we have seen globalisation and the emergence of countries like China placing great competition into global markets. We've also seen increased emphasis on the environmental impacts of fossil fuel use, and an economic recession in many countries. The hot question right now is whether the UK should remain in the European Union? A key idea of the Future Forum is that we can have a voice on such issues and also make a positive difference to the future of our industry.

Q Tell us a bit about your background...

A I'm originally from Grimsby, a small town known for its fishing heritage on the east coast of England. I work for BASF at the largest site in the UK in Bradford, West Yorkshire. The site is about fifty acres in size and manufactures products for water solutions, oilfield, mining, care chemicals, dispersions and pigment markets. Currently my position is the Site Instrumentation Engineer where my responsibilities are maintenance strategies, legal compliance and providing an efficient maintenance service to operations. I've also studied towards an honours degree throughout the past six years through the Open University.

I started my career at BASF after leaving school through an engineering apprenticeship and developed into a professional role. *It's interesting to look back at my apprenticeship – especially the haircut... what was I thinking?!*

Q What first interested you about the chemical industries and what do you think can be done to attract others to join?

A Work experience at a motor repair shop, influence from family members and the aspiration to start a working career led me to the conclusion that an apprenticeship was the route to take! *I think we can do more to advocate apprenticeships as a fantastic route into industry with opportunities to develop a professional career.*

You'll gather that my aspirations weren't directly linked to the

Chemical Industry; in fact I could easily have entered another sector. So for me, an open point for the Future Forum is how we inspire the next generation of innovators to join The Chemical Industry? The 'STEM' initiative is a fantastic scheme that aims to get children interested in technical subjects such as science. It is a simple process to become a STEM ambassador and help towards this cause – I encourage people to get involved as much as they can! It's also important to spread the word that there are many opportunities in the chemical industry that aren't 'engineering' or 'science' focussed including sales, procurement, supply chain, marketing and many more.

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Q What advice would you give to somebody who is trying to decide on the best route into the industry?

A I would say to gain work experience by some means is essential! Even if it's for a couple of weeks, not only does it show your desire to succeed and give you something to talk about in an interview, it also allows you to check that the vocation is right for you.

Q What would you say is the best part of your job?

A I could say many things here, working with state of the art technology or delivering exciting projects. But I have to say the fantastic people that I have worked with throughout the past eleven years have been the highlight. From my apprenticeship right through to my current role, many people have given time to mentor and develop my skills. As I'm no longer the youngest or the least experienced, it's rewarding to have the opportunity to mentor less experienced colleagues and see them reach their full potential.

Q You recently met with one of David Cameron's Policy Advisors at 10 Downing Street...

A I've never been afraid to seize opportunities when they arise but in some ways this was definitely more daunting than usual. The preparation was excellent and as a team we gave the right messages. It was interesting to see, first-hand, how respected the CIA is in arenas such as government.



Q A bit of a scary question – where would you like to see yourself in 10 years time?

A Speaking openly, I've always had aspirations to keep moving onwards and take on new challenges so who knows. My next target is a leadership position, so I would like to think in ten years I will be in my second managerial position.

Q Your passion for your work shines through! How do you like to spend your free time?

A My ideal weekend starts with a Friday night with my wife and friends heading into the vibrant city of Leeds for food and drinks. Saturday and Sunday would include a round of golf, followed by victories for Manchester United and Lewis Hamilton!

Q Finally, there are some exciting plans in place for the Future Forum over the coming year – how can people get involved?

A The opportunity for us to create change will only grow as more people get involved so please do so on our social media pages. [We are planning a Future Forum Conference for next spring, so keep your eyes peeled for further details...](#)

To get involved, join the 'CIA Future Forum' group on LinkedIn.



You can also like the 'CIA Future Forum' page on Facebook and check out www.cia.org.uk to find out more.



For any further information, please contact CIA's Luke Symns at symnsl@cia.org.uk.