

The Diplomat from Dow

A 10 Minute Tea Break with your new Young Ambassador



CIA Communications Exec Luke Symns quizzes **Stephen Donnelly**, new Young Ambassador and leader of the Future Forum, on work, life and his aspirations for the future of our industry.

1

Stephen – BIG congratulations on being crowned Young Ambassador at this year's Chemical Industry Awards. How does it feel?

The Award's night was a new experience for me and considering the strength of the other nominees my focus was ensuring I could stay in contact with them after the winner was announced.

Hearing my name called was surreal. The other finalists were very supportive and Stefano (the outgoing Young Ambassador) and I could talk about the year to come... It very quickly became exciting to think about the opportunities ahead.

2

Give us a bit of background about yourself...

I work with Dow Chemical in Supply Chain and have been with them for four years. Originally, at university I studied finance but was interested to get close to operations after a four month internship in a Japanese train factory. I've been

lucky to do international assignments and see a lot of different areas of the value chain.

The last six months have been fun as I got married this summer and after taking a new role with less travel I have joined an American Football team.

3

As Young Ambassador, you will be leading the Future Forum over the coming year. For those not familiar with the Forum a) what is it, and b) why do you think it's important?

The Future Forum is a community for young talents in the chemical industry that is led by other young talents. It's



Work-life balance: Stephen enjoys playing American Football in his free time.

a great opportunity for us to share experiences across sites or functions that we're not typically exposed to – through face to face events or communication updates.

Stefano and Lee have really built up the core of the Future Forum in the last two years and helped to gain members of the Future Forum seats on different CIA Strategy Groups.

There will be a lot going on in the next few years for our region. It's important then that we take ownership in making tomorrow happen.

4

Why should those at the start of their careers consider joining?

Few industries have the breadth of the chemical industry in terms of experiences on offer. R&D, Manufacturing, Sales, Finance, Marketing, HR, etc... The Future Forum gives quick exposure and insights into the working lives of fellow members. It also gives folks an opportunity to attend some events organised by external partners.

5

Turning our attention to current affairs, the news of late has been 'busy' to say the least. What do you consider to be the biggest challenges facing our industry at the moment?

Brexit is the biggest challenge. Keeping people energised in the discussion to keep products flowing smoothly in and out of the UK.

On top of that, many of us work with multinational companies and are potentially at risk of missing out on opportunities – especially bearing in mind the mergers on-going in the industry. It's important to keep these concerns visible to decision makers.

6

How can members of the Future Forum contribute to overcoming these challenges?

Participating in events is a good way to engage. One of the most important things we can do though is take advantage of the opportunity to take a seat on some of the CIA's strategy groups in areas that are of interest/concern.

7

Returning to focus on your career, what do you most enjoy about your work?

One of the things I enjoy is the global nature of my role and the industry. Going through a day and getting to talk to people from all over the world whilst balancing the needs of different stakeholders. Every day is challenging, different and interesting.

8

Are there any aspects that you dislike?

Like anything at this scale it can be stressful at times, especially if your decision making risks disappointing a customer. As much fun as it is getting to meet and interact with people all over the world, it often requires phone calls at all hours of the day. Though late night business calls can make you seem very important to your family...

9

Now, looking to the future. Where do you see yourself in ten years' time?

It's a cliché but I see myself being impactful. Originally I thought leading a large team would be the definition of success but getting to learn our industry, it's clear how impactful you can be without an org chart below you. I would hope to be knocking on the doors of the leadership team of a chemical business unit.

10

Finally, the success of the Future Forum relies on the involvement of employees across CIA's network of member companies. How can people get involved?

Of course, the Future Forum will only go as far as the members can take it. You can keep up to date with us through our newsletter and LinkedIn.

We will be hosting regional events in the coming twelve months and if you have any interest in attending, speaking or hosting an event – please feel free to reach out to me personally.

Inspired by Stephen?

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Global outlook: Stephen (left) meets with Dow colleagues from India and Germany in Switzerland.