

SEP Rail: Building a business with people at its heart

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SEP Rail Services is celebrating its third birthday, with Managing Director, Rikki Morrow, describing the success so far as just the tip of the iceberg.

Since day one, Rikki's main focus has been upon caring for and getting the best from his team. For the MD of **SEP Rail Services**, the importance they've placed upon their workforce is the main reason the company has been so successful in a relatively short space of time.

It may have opened its doors in 2018, but SEP Rail Services is already one of the fastest growing rail surveying firms in the UK, having built an enviable track record working on major rail projects for the likes of Colas Rail, Network Rail and Keltbray.

"I was always confident SEP Rail Services would be a success – there was never a doubt in my mind – but never did I think in just three years of trading we'd have grown to a team of 47 and a turnover of roughly £5-6million", said Rikki.

"But the business is only as good as the people around me and, thankfully, I've managed to bring a

fantastic team on board, experts in a whole variety of disciplines. It's all down to hard work and commitment. Yes, I'm sitting at the top and so it all starts with me, but that dedication cascades down - everyone plays their part."



Some of their most popular services include:

- Railway track surveys
- Gauge clearance surveys
- Topographic surveys
- 3D HDS point cloud and BIM solutions
- Control network installation and verification
- Height and stagger OLE surveys
- Track and structure monitoring
- Access planning

- Site engineering
- Ground investigation
- CCTV drainage surveys
- Utility mapping surveys

Rikki continued: “I knew it was a massive opportunity – and also a huge challenge – trying to bring so much under one roof. But that had always been in my mind when setting up SEP Rail Services. Multiple disciplines under one roof, retained under a single point of contact and accountability.

“There’s no other company that I know of that has the degree of capability that we do in-house, so I knew full well there was a significant opportunity here. When push came to shove, it was a matter of picking the right people with the right skillsets, and the right frame of mind, who bought into my vision.”

Even before coronavirus, making sure his workforce is happy and healthy has always been at the forefront of Rikki’s mind.

He said: “In one sense, I’ve always wanted SEP to be like a family-run business, with everybody having a sense of pride and, as my grandad used to say, ‘to be excited to jump out of bed and go to work’. We know that both people and technology are at the heart of everything we do. It shouldn’t be a surprise, therefore, that we’re consistently investing in both.

“Seeing how our people are so proud to be part of this business, watching them reach their goals – that’s a huge motivation for me. It’s very much about getting the best out of our employees – especially in our game which involves spending a lot of nights and weekends working away from home.

“I’m big on health, wellbeing and mental health, trying to put the support in place to keep our team healthy and engaged – and communication is massive to me. I want all the workers to be proud of who they work for and to know that I’m proud of their efforts. I really want everyone to be excited about where the business has come from and where it’s going.”



Rikki's career on track started completely by chance. Before making the move to rail, he'd just finished playing semi-professional rugby and was seeking a new challenge after suffering a serious knee injury.

"I had quite a bad injury so had to rethink my life a bit." It was through the dad of someone I played rugby with that I got an opportunity to work at Corus Rail", he said.

"I've not looked back since – and that was over 20 years ago! I found my feet, spent a bit of time at different departments at Corus before moving into the survey department, a new team at that time, and was given the opportunity to find my own way."

Rikki started his career on the railways as a route clearance designer and junior surveyor with Corus, becoming lead surveyor within four years.

Just a few years later, he moved on to Colas Rail, taking up the position of senior surveyor, rising quickly through the ranks to become operations and then senior operations manager before leaving to become survey director at a competing railway surveying firm.

He said: "The aim with SEP Rail Services was to put something out there that nobody else had and, you know what? With this level of capability under one roof, I think we've achieved that. I genuinely don't believe anyone can compete with that."

"I'll admit, I'm pretty driven – I think anyone who's worked with me will attest to that! I want to take over the world within our market – that's just the way I am. But more importantly, I want to change the landscape, to improve how firms like ours are perceived. I want to set new benchmarks for quality and service within the industry. It's quality AND quantity for me, 100%. And what've achieved so far is just the tip of the iceberg."

We'll have the second part of the interview with Rikki in Wednesday's email, in which he talks about the launch of two new businesses in the last 12 months as well as his plans for the future.

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