

# enGauging with the right people to forge a successful career in rail

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*Originally from Venezuela, design engineer Jonathan Telesca joined the enGauged team in 2021. He explains how, with the support of his team, he's forging a successful career in rail.*

If I could offer newcomers to the UK rail industry one piece of advice, it would be 'spend time around knowledgeable people, and ask them as many questions as possible.'

It's an approach that served me well when I emigrated to the UK from Venezuela and secured my first role in the rail industry, as an assistant design engineer with specialist design practice enGauged. With the support of enGauged's team, I'm now studying for a master's degree in engineering and working towards

chartered engineer status.

#### New opportunities in the UK

A qualified civil engineer, I struggled to find work due to the economic and political climate in my home country of Venezuela. After emigrating to England, I secured an engineering role, but soon recognised that it wasn't the right fit for me.

When I interviewed with enGauged, I knew very little about the rail industry – besides the fact that trains run on two rails! Nevertheless, I was aware that the role would involve some civil engineering, and felt ready to gain experience in a new sector. After learning more about the projects enGauged undertakes – and being impressed by managing director Steve Whitmore and principal engineer Chris Seagar – I realised it was the kind of company I wanted to work for.

I started out as an assistant but explained that I was keen to become a design engineer – something I've since achieved. Today, I'm involved in the design of everything from temporary works and lineside buildings to footbridges, depots and platforms.

#### Bridging knowledge gaps

But a lack of rail knowledge initially threatened to hold me back. It was during this period that I realised just how important the right guidance is for newcomers to the rail industry. Unlike Venezuela, the UK has countless industry bodies and organisations; Steve and the team helped me to understand them, providing all the information I needed.

And, to qualify for a Personal Track Safety Card, you need basic knowledge of the rail industry. To prepare, I had a series of sessions with Steve and Lee, who also took me to Crewe station and showed me around.

I quickly realised that designers should take every opportunity to go onsite. These visits were very beneficial for me, helping me to understand the assets I was designing. Ultimately, getting out of the office and gaining practical experience is essential for industry newcomers.

Being willing to ask questions (even if they seem silly) is equally important. At enGauged, I work with some incredibly experienced engineers – but they're always keen to share their knowledge with me. In my first three months with the business, I asked question after question, even having hour-long sessions with Steve to discuss the industry. I was never overwhelmed; the team fed me information gradually, ensuring that I could take it on board. I learned that, if you don't know something, you should just ask.

#### Mastering a new industry

The team's support has also enabled me to pursue a master's degree in engineering via the Open University. I began the home-based course (which includes modules on project and business management) shortly before joining enGauged. Today, the business allows me to take study breaks, and grants me time off when I need it. While I'm able to complete most of my work at the weekend, it requires real effort, and meeting deadlines can prove challenging. Those days off make a big difference.

I'm also working to become a chartered engineer via the Permanent Way Institution (PWI). There are so many industry bodies to choose from, and I wasn't sure which one was right for me. Steve pointed me in the direction of PWI, explaining that I could always join different organisations in future.

#### New responsibilities

And being new to the industry doesn't mean you can't progress – again, it's often just a case of asking. I regularly ask for more involvement in projects, and Steve will always strive to make it happen.

I've been afforded some great opportunities. My first project was an industry-first report for Network Rail; it focused on replacing the concrete surrounding piles with gravel and has since been accepted. I've also been involved in the Wixams station development and am just starting work on the electrification of route section two and three on the Midland Main Line. It's a large project and Steve gave me that responsibility, showing that he believes in me.

In future, I'd like to become a senior design engineer, perhaps bringing my business or project management expertise into play. And if I've learned one thing as a newcomer to the rail industry, it's that finding the right team is key. The environment at enGauged is very supportive, and if you're unsure of something, a colleague will guide you. You might find yourself working for a great company – but if you don't have a supportive and experienced team, the job becomes harder.

To find out about enGauged [click here](#).

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