

SPOTLIGHT

ON LYNDA TURNER



Angela Wilkins shines a light on our very own Shawston squad via the Spotlight series, a series of informal chats with key members of staff talking candidly about their roles within the Shawston group and how they have developed. It's simple really, aim the light and watch them shine.

A force of nature. That's how I would refer to the next member of the Shawston Squad. If you've ever called Shawston Manchester the chances are you will have spoken to Lynda Turner, her warm and sparky personality give her the instant likeability factor that many strive for. Fondly known as "Techno Turner" by her Shawston colleagues due to her technical knowledge, Lynda is Shawston through and through with black and red blood running through her veins. Immaculately presented,

the perfect work ethic and a knowledge base that would test some of the best people in the industry Lynda is a true representation of Shawston's culture and ethics. I've managed to stop Techno Turner in her tracks today to find out what drives her and why winning is her number one priority.

Background

No stranger to working in an environment heavily dominated by men, Lynda's previous role working in

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a taxi rank stood her in good stead for a move into our industry. Tired of working unsociable hours, she began to start to think about expanding her horizons and set out to look for a job with more general office hours.

A job advert in a Stockport job agency found Lynda applying to join the Purchase Ledger department at Shawston as maternity cover for Rob's wife Michelle. That was 18 years ago and Lynda is now one of the most popular and longest standing members of the Shawston family.

Lynda on Shawston

I joined Shawston on a temporary basis to cover for Michelle whilst she was on maternity leave. It was about a year after Rob had bought the business and at that point there weren't many females on the scene. In total there were 15 of us in the Hyde branch, of which quite a few of them are still working in the Hyde branch today.

Part of my job was writing out the cheques every Friday for suppliers to make sure they got paid on time. That's a thing of the past isn't it?! I was beginning to get really bored with the job so one day I remember saying to Rob "Is this it?" I was bored, so bored. I'll always remember Rob saying, "Go on sales, go on sales" but I'd never done sales in my life, so I wasn't too sure, but he said, "You don't know until you've tried it" and that was it. That's where my journey into sales started.

I always knew that if I didn't like it then there wasn't any pressure to stick it out, Rob made sure of that, he always said that I could revert back to my current job role if sales didn't work out. He just had this confidence in me, both him and Michelle to be fair, they just knew I could do it.

So, there I was thrown in at the deep end straight into sales, there were just 4 of us and Rob in the same office. It was a small family business at first, very intimate, it was great. I loved it, even though the building was falling apart – they were magical times. I remember that every time it rained the office flooded, but that just shows how we have grown as a business. If you'd have said back then where we would be today, I'd have never believed it.

I became really experienced in sales, mainly on the fire side and I did quotes, orders, a bit of everything really, but I've always stayed on the customer services side of the business. I remember when I first met Graham Wilkins, he took me to ASDA when I first started to show me all the sprinkler pipework in the ceiling. That gave me a good understanding of just what it was that I was selling and how it worked which always helps when talking to our customers.

I love winning orders. Always have and always will. I love getting results from customers too, especially when I ring customers and show them how good we are and then when they thank me – well I just love it!

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I hate losing. I hate it! I know you can't win them all, but I want to. I really think my drive has increased since I first started my job and what can I say, I still really enjoy it. No two days are the same so that keeps me on my toes too. I have learnt that relationships are the key to success alongside service. In my experience 90% of people will go for service, they might save money elsewhere, but then again, they might not get the delivery on time and in full, however with Shawston they know they will.

Lynda on Share Ownership

I bought into Shawston straight away. I was one of the fortunate ones who got to go and look around Gripple Ltd in Sheffield and it was amazing (Gripple Ltd is a very successful employee-owned business based in Sheffield, Yorkshire). Unbelievable. All the staff there act like owners and we're seeing that coming through more and more at Shawston too.

To be honest I wouldn't say it has changed me massively because I still work in the same way. I'm not a lazy worker. I've always grafted, and I won't go home until the job is done. So, no I don't think it's changed me in that way, but you feel that you can make more decisions now. I'm more confident making decisions and that's certainly as a direct impact of the employee ownership culture here.

Becoming employee owned (EO) was a great move for the company, it's also great for newcomers to work for an EO company. What an attractive benefit to consider when you apply for a job at Shawston.

I feel proud to be a shareholder especially because I feel like I've been there from the start. I've seen Shawston grow, it's a massive achievement when you look back and think we've come from one falling

down Shawston office to five nationwide depots with brand new buildings. You sit back and think I was there through that; it makes you feel proud.

We've been through recessions and come out of the other side and we'll be the same with this [Covid-19 pandemic] we'll come out the other side stronger than ever because that's what Shawston do. We have the right balance, the right people and there is a real family feel here, but there always was, going back to when I first started 18 years ago. The sense of community and family stems from Rob, Michelle, Graham and Mark Dyer – they always make you feel welcome, you know you can ring anyone, speak to anyone and that's how it should be. Everyone is treated the same, we're here to do a job and get results; that's it. If you put the effort in, you will benefit from it.

Lynda on Mentorship

I've never had a formal mentor, I guess you could say it was Rob, it was never formally agreed, but he has always been there as a great support to me throughout my time at Shawston. I would definitely say that Mark, Michelle, and Graham have always given me the help that I needed. They have all always



been there if I've needed anything and that's the great thing really, people have always spotted something in me and evolved a role around me. I've been quite lucky like that.

I like the fact that I used to be the one asking for help all the time and I find now people come to me for help and I love it. I find that dead empowering knowing my self-worth, it's like I've become the mentor now which is really inspiring.

Greatest Achievement

I remember getting a cash sale for £46k back in 2013, in fact I need to ring that company because they don't deal with us anymore! It had been a few months work of 'to-ing and fro-ing' with quotes and phone calls then one day they rang and said they wanted to place the order and pay in cash. I couldn't believe it! A couple of bank transfers later and they arrived to collect the order from the Trade Counter at Hyde. I was really proud of that!

No Barriers

The ethos at Shawston if you make a mistake, is as long as you learn from it for next time, then that's okay. They are good here at letting you find your own

way and making you less reliant on other people. Aaron Khan has done that with me a lot, he'll say "Well, what would you do?" and that really helps me a lot. So, before I pick up the phone to him for help, I think I can do this myself and that has been really empowering. I feel like I've grown a lot by making mistakes and learning from them.

I'm still learning, you're learning every day but we're all a team and we should be able to go to anyone and ask for help. There is a great culture here at Shawston, everyone wants everyone to do well and that's just the way it is.

Lynda on the Future

At the moment I'm really enjoy my role as Key Account Custodian which involves me talking to the guys on site, talking to the people who place the orders, and looking at jobs that are being scheduled and jobs that are already in progress. I'll happily do anything me I'm not bothered. Whatever needs doing I'll do it, oh apart from cold calling – I don't fancy that at all!

My plan when my son starts school is to come back full time and I definitely see my future in the fire team, without a shadow of a doubt. I've had a brilliant journey so far and a wonderful career path. I want to keep working at Shawston, the biggest fire distributor in the market, and help us to retain our position and perhaps grow even bigger.

I've often been asked if I see myself as a Sales Account Manager out on the road, but I always say no to that, it's completely outside of my comfort zone, even though lots of people in Shawston say that I would be good at it. Plus, I don't drive anyway, although Shawston have offered to help me learn.... ♦



Shawston has so many more amazing examples of meritocracy – sponsorship of MBA's, graduate development schemes, and a strong record for internal promotion to name just a few. And the common theme is that all these people made a choice – the choice to improve, to be better, to progress, and to shine. And that's the essence of Employee Ownership. We encourage a freedom of expression rarely seen in business, we push people to be better versions of themselves, and we give them the space to make choices.

So, if you're interested in a career with Shawston, make the choice to email us your cv and a covering letter to hr@shawston.co.uk or [visit our website](#) to read more about choosing to hop on board to a new career.