

SPOTLIGHT

ON SIMON EDWARDS



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.

I have finally managed to pin down one of our most experienced drivers within the business, Simon Edwards. No two days are the same for Simon as he transports and delivers his part of our annual 250,000 tonnes of goods to our customers. We pride ourselves on making a delivery to a site in the UK every 90 seconds, so they are pretty big shoes to fill. But fill them he does.

With 5 years' experience driving and delivering goods

in and around the centre of London Simon is here today to give me a rare glimpse into the essential cog in our nationwide network of branches, our unrivalled next day delivery service and to share his take on how to handle the stresses and pressures of delivering into the London network. Take a seat and get ready for the ride.

Background

Since leaving school it was clear that Simon has

Practice
makes
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now drives
an 18-tonne
Shawston
truck

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always had a keen interest in mechanics, starting his career in Kwik Fit it wasn't until his long-term friend Craig Harding mentioned that Shawston were looking for drivers that Simon decided to jump ship.

Simon is now responsible for delivering a huge chunk of the 250,000 tonnes of goods to Shawston customers each year, if that isn't enough pressure then delivering these good into London and surrounding areas definitely has upped the ante. Patience, great organisational skills and map reading are all daily essentials for Simon's role, he also needs to be pretty good at driving an 18-tonne vehicle too.

Simon on Shawston

When Craig told me that Shawston had driving jobs available I thought it sounded right up my street. I went for an interview, got the job, and started out by being a van driver – multi dropping goods right in the centre of London. I enjoyed doing that, but I had started to consider stepping it up a gear and applying for my HGV licence, I thought I could progress further here, help my own career by going up a notch. Shawston supported me in my application and it took me a few attempts to pass it...3 to be clear. Thankfully Shawston were very patient with me, and I always say practice makes perfect!

Since getting my HGV licence I haven't moved from driving an 18-tonne truck, I've also got my Hiab licence through Shawston along with my forklift licence too, they really have backed me in being able to apply and take all those tests, it's so good to know you are valued and worth investing in.

Today I'm in a Driver Supervisor programme, this basically means that I'm in charge of all the drivers, any issues they may have in the mornings, any

infringements they pick up, reports, investigations, and things like that. This role has certainly become a lot more stressful due to the current pandemic, but you just get on with it.

I go out driving in the mornings and then get back to the branch to start picking and packing orders, transport planning and sometimes I don't get home until 5/6pm in the evening, then I start again at 5am the next day. It's all hands-on deck at the minute but that's the beauty of Shawston, you don't need to ask anyone twice to help out, it's part of our culture.

A normal day for me starts at 4.30am, I like to get to the branch early in case there is anything else that needs loading.

Driving in London can be horrendous, I've been delivering in and around the centre of London for 5 years now. It's stressful but you have to try not to let it get to you. If you're sat in traffic and you're going to be late then there is nothing you can do about it, de-stress and take it on the chin. Each wagon can make 12-15 drops a day, right in the centre with time slots and that's tough. We've had drivers leave in the past due to not being able to handle the stress of it. I tell my drivers to just do the best you can, we can't be everywhere at once, so learn to relax in times of pressure.

Craig is our Transport Planner; he plans everyone's day and liaises with our customers. I help him out as much as I can, I'm pretty clued up on this now and I fill in for Craig when he's on holidays, this is great for me as I have another tool on my belt. Certain sites work on a booking in system, times, vehicles, drivers. I would say that

half of the sites in London aren't stressed about exact times, but some sites will deny you entry if you're an hour late, due to traffic and then we have to go back another day. We sometimes have a lot of repeat deliveries, especially if we have multiple customers on one site in London over the space of a month. I like this as I know where I'm going to and how long it will take me.

A normal day for me starts at the branch at 4.30am, I get to the branch early just in case there is anything else that needs to be loaded, the warehouse sometimes are busy, so I've said to them, if you're struggling loading everything, text me the night before and I'll come in early in the morning to finish loading the wagons. Just so, you know, the warehouse guys can go home at a decent hour. It's no more for me to come in an hour early, load everything and get on my way.

I leave the yard at 6am and start my deliveries, I never know where I'm going until the morning and I enjoy that, every day is different. My normal working hours are 5am – 2pm but if I finish early, I help out in the warehouse, this always depends on traffic in London which varies from day-to-day.

I have to say that when I first started the job I thought

“Yeah I can do that” and then after week 1 the early starts and late finishes hit me like a brick! I actually thought to myself, “Can I actually do this?” but now my body clock is used to it. I'm so used to it now, even on the weekend I find myself getting up at 7am and thinking “What am I doing?!” Not even my baby is awake at 7am [laughs] he's having a lie in so why am I awake?!

Simon on Share Ownership

When I first joined Shawston the share scheme was optional and at the time I was unsure, unaware, and uncertain of whether or not joining the scheme would be the right thing for me to do. I was just starting out in my career so I thought I would watch how the scheme works before I commit to joining it.

Since that time Shawston have really put a lot of work into communicating the benefits of joining the scheme, explaining how it works and at the same time most of my colleagues are shareholders too so I'm pretty sure that I will take out shares in the near future.

To be honest I still work as hard without being a shareholder as I would if I owned shares. My work ethic has always been the same and it always will I want to work as hard as I can to make the business



a success and to help out my colleagues, that's never going to change whether I own shares in the business or not. I also very much doubt that anyone at Shawston will think less of me because I don't have shares. I've never been pressured into taking shares, it's not that kind of place. It's always been my decision basically and I respect that massively.

Simon on Mentorship

There have been quite a few people here that have helped me and therefore played a big part in my development, but I would say that Craig Harding has been my biggest influence. I've followed his guidelines and his guidance which I certainly think has helped me progress in my career at Shawston.

Now that I am more confident and capable in the job, I feel like it's my turn to pass my knowledge on to others, go full circle if you like. I have now become a mentor to others and that is such a great feeling to have.

Greatest Achievement

Getting my HGV licence - when I finally passed! I like to think of it as being third time lucky, I got a lot of stick for failing, all good natured but I think my colleagues had run out of things to say to me at that

point so it's a good job I passed on the third try! I aced the theory test it was just the driving I struggled with [laughs].

When I finally passed, I went back to the Shawston yard and waved my pass certificate in the air, the guys said "right, thank God for that!" and they took me to the pub. They are a great team of drivers, we have a good relationship, lots of banter which lifts everyone's mood, again that's a nod to the Shawston culture that has been created. Everyone wants everyone to do well.

No Barriers

One of the great things about working at Shawston is the lack of obstacles in your way, it's your choice to move onwards and upwards, they will support you but it's your decision and this applies to all levels of the business from the bottom to the top.

If you show an interest in getting a new skill directly linked to your job then you are given the go ahead, I think they recognise that it's a win-win. Developing you means the business develops and that's the end goal for us all.

Simon on the Future

I really enjoy being out on the road. I'm in my own bubble, I'm my own boss and I make my own decisions, it's essential that you deal with the problems yourself and work things out by yourself, there is only you in the cab, so you have to be pretty self-reliant. It's both nerve racking and empowering at the same time but it's definitely added to my confidence over the years. I've never thought of doing anything else, I love being in my truck out on the road.♦

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.

