



WHY IT MATTERS...

MANUFACTURING & PRODUCT DESIGN ENGINEERING



Loughborough University

Alex Lees

Videographer, Producer, Company Director

Although a lot of people look confused when I say I am an engineer running a video production company, I believe that these two skills have given the company the competitive edge as a result. The project management, customer understanding, design thinking, problem solving and teamwork that I gained from my degree, has provided me the skills to bring an engineering mindset into building systems and processes that I never would have learnt doing a course that was focused on video production.



Some may think of me as being a failed engineer, with such a different change in career. But I can safely say I put everything into the degree and was only 0.5% from achieving a first class honours. And as Tale Production starts to grow to a level that is beyond where my engineering career would have gone, I can safely say that even though others had their doubts, I am happier and more fulfilled with what I am doing now and I wouldn't change any part of the journey to get here.

<p>Post 16 Education AS Level Biology A Levels- Maths, Physics, Resistant Materials</p>	<p>Higher Education MEng Product Design Engineering, Loughborough University</p>
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Why did you choose Product Design Engineering?

When I was 17 I loved sport and I was better at numbers than words. So I felt my choices were to take on a degree in a sports related subject or engineering. At the time I followed my head over my heart, and took the engineering route, as I believed this was the direction that would give me the greatest career progression. In addition, a family member made a comment of "what career progression is there in sport equipment, it's all been designed already". At the time this resonated with me, and I took the engineering route, however, knowing what I now know about sports tech, there is still a lot of innovation and changes to the industry. So, listen to your heart and make a decision based on what you want and don't be influenced by others.





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Alex's experience as a student

I chose to study at Loughborough, because as a keen Tennis player and lover of lots of other sports, I knew Loughborough would give me the opportunity to compete at a high level and try others sports. In addition to this, Loughborough was one of the few universities that offered product design engineering and the facilities were very impressive when I came along to an open day. What I didn't realise before starting, was that the university had lots of opportunities to get involved in enterprise activities, for the skills needed to start your own business. The support came in three tiers of inspire, develop, and fly, of which I had the opportunity to be a part of two of them, getting support to start a business whilst at university and also after I had finished my degree. This support has led me to where I am today, running a video production company that actually specialises in supporting universities.

Alex's Career

After university, I completed my degree and hadn't yet found a job. I found myself half heartedly applying for engineering jobs, and after getting to the last 2 of a job for Red Bull F1 and missing out, I then realised that my feeling of relief for



not getting the job was definitely not the feeling I should have been having. I then decided to take my love of design, which was the part of my degree I enjoyed the most, and see if I could use some of the enterprise knowledge gained at Loughborough to start a business.

This has turned out to be a roller coaster ride to get my company Tale Production to the point it is at today and there have been some challenging and emotional times along the way. However, with the springboard of Loughborough's Enterprise support, post university, this gave me the confidence to keep pushing and continue to evolve and grow the company.

Alex's advice: At the age of 17 I felt the pressure that I should be picking the exact course that would start my journey on the right career path. But in hindsight, and knowing what I know now, I think it's more important to choose something you enjoy doing and use your university time to discover lots of other potential activities, be a part of other groups, committees and discover yourself whilst you are there. There are so many things you don't realise are available before university, such as being involved in enterprise activities, student groups and different sport clubs. I got involved in some of these, but I would highly recommend stepping outside of your comfort zone and doing as much as you can. As well, if you are given the chance, do a year in industry or year in enterprise as part of your university course, I would 100% recommend it. For me it was an opportunity to realise the industry wasn't the direction I wanted to take my career.