

## Stephen Watson

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### Principal, Arthur D. Little

BEng Chemical Engineering (1991)



When I graduated from *the University of Birmingham* I went to work for *Shell International Chemicals* in The Hague in the Netherlands. I spent two years as a process engineer designing new petrochemical plants, and then went for two months to Brazil to support the start-up of an agrochemical plant. I then spent a year providing technical support to polypropylene manufacturing plants. After three years in The Hague I moved to Geelong in Australia to work on the polypropylene manufacturing plant. I supported day-to-day operations as well as undertook process engineering of plant modifications. After a short spell on a UK manufacturing plant I joined the Safety Risk team of global management consultancy *Arthur D. Little* in 1998.

### What is the best thing about what you are doing now?

I work with leaders of high hazard companies in a range of sectors (transport, construction and oil & gas) round the world to help them improve their safety leadership and safety culture. I travel to interesting places and work with organisation facing real safety challenges.

### What was the best thing about your time as a student here?

Birmingham was a great city to be a student - a wide variety of things to do on campus as well as a city undergoing a transformation during my time as a student. *The ICC* was open just after I graduated and *Broad Street* was being transformed.

### In what way did living and studying in Birmingham live up to your expectations?

The *University of Birmingham* Chemical Engineering program provided an excellent coverage of all the key chemical engineering topics (as you would expect) but I seemed to have learnt enough to be able to undertake design of new plant for *Shell*. I was exposed to a wide range of cultures while at Birmingham which was an excellent preparation for working internationally both for *Shell* and then *Arthur D. Little*.

### How did you grow as a person by coming to University? Did it change your life in any way?

My time at Birmingham developed my passion for process engineering design which enabled me to secure my first job with *Shell*. I also started to develop the interests and skills that enabled me to be a management consultant making a real difference with organisations today.

### What advice would you give to current students studying on your degree programme?

Work hard, but play hard too. I spent a year running the Student Industrial Society and found time in my final year to get off campus as a first aid volunteer for *St. John Ambulance* which took me all over Birmingham and the West Midlands.

### Is there anything else you would like to share?

I lead our recruitment for the Safety Risk team, so we are always interested to hear from those who might be interested in helping clients to better manage their safety risks.

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