

# STUDENT CASE STUDY

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## Making the world of work relatable to young people through Virtual Work Experience (VWEX).

It is rare for young people to be experts in careers without a little outside help. Most need guidance to work out what it is they want to do and to craft a game plan for how to make it happen.

Going it alone can feel daunting, especially if you do not have the luxury of a readymade network of knowledgeable senior contacts to help grease the wheels for you to get ahead. For young people like Felix, who attends a state secondary school in Aylesbury, navigating the murky waters of future careers means taking the initiative to look into each and every opportunity his school can offer.

Luckily for Felix he already has an inkling of what he wants to do – he knows he is interested in becoming an engineer. But up until recently he was still not sure whether it was really the right career choice for him or how he should go about getting into it.

With the support of his school, Felix was successful in securing one of 30 places being offered through Speakers for Schools to do a five-day Virtual Work Experience placement with international infrastructure specialists Align JV.



## Key facts

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**Name:** Felix

**Age:** 16

**Location:** Aylesbury

**Did either of your parents go to university?** Yes

**Do your parents both work?** Yes, my father is a Chemistry teacher and Deputy Head at a secondary school, my mother was a Psychology researcher, but is currently a stay-at-home parent.

**What are you currently studying?** A-levels in Maths, Physics, Chemistry and Psychology.

**Who was your placement with?** Align JV

**What type of placement was it?** Five-day Virtual Work Experience placement.

Align JV is no small operation. It is a joint venture between three significant companies: Bouygues Travaux Publics (a subsidiary of Bouygues Construction), Robert McAlpine and VolkerFitzpatrick (a subsidiary of VolkerWessels).

Working together as Align JV, these companies employ over 20,000 people and are responsible for delivering a 21.6km section of the UK's high speed rail project High Speed 2 line (HS2). They are used to tackling high-profile engineering projects and have a lot of combined experience in this area, which makes them a great match for someone like Felix.

Through his online placement, Felix gained an insight into the vast world of international engineering without needing to set a single foot outside of his own home. Felix learnt about the culture of the joint venture, about the diversity of engineering roles available and about the many new opportunities a career in engineering could bring, including the chance to travel – something which Felix is very keen to do.

In his own words: "...through the lecturers and speakers, the idea of a career in this field became so much clearer and closer."

And because the people hosting the experience were not actually much older than Felix himself, he found the whole experience to be all the more engaging and relatable, making him realise:

"Wow, I could be doing this in two years' time if I wanted to". By seeing other people already achieving, it made me so excited to get my A-levels and be able to start on the path I want to take.'

## Key insights

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This work experience provided so much insight for me into the world of careers in engineering, in two main senses. The first is that, through the lecturers and speakers, the idea of a career in this field became so much clearer and closer... It also showed me so much about the diversity of the occupation, and how many different fields I could go in to, from health and safety to environmental protection.

It might only have been a virtual experience, but Felix credits his placement with helping to show him what he enjoys most about engineering and helping him to appreciate why sustainability is an important consideration for his future career.

“We spent a whole day learning about sustainability and looked at a real-life project they’re working on to make something greener. It was really insightful and interesting to find out how to become more energy efficient. When I have my own kids, I want to be able to tell them I made the world a better place.”

And having spent five days hearing from young people who have already started their career journey, he now knows the steps he needs to take to achieve his goals and has the confidence to start making it happen.

For Felix, five days of Virtual Work Experience brought the world of work alive and broadened his knowledge and skills in a way that no normal classroom could.

**Help others like Felix.**

**Sign up to host work experience with Speakers for Schools now.**

[s4snextgen.org/Sign-Up/Employers](https://s4snextgen.org/Sign-Up/Employers)

## Key insights

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