

What is your current job title?

Refrigeration Engineer.

Before working with Star, you served in the Armed Forces. Can you tell us a bit about your role in the army?

I served over 22 years in the Royal Artillery, mainly in the G4 chain (Logistics). I started in the army as a munitions driver and then progressed through various roles, achieving a steady career progression to Warrant Officer, class 2 (RQMS (M)). I have had the pleasure of working across many environments, roles and terrains worldwide - whether it be in a training, peace-keeping or a combat role. During my time in the army I completed numerous operational tours in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Afghanistan. After serving 22 years in the Army my contract ended and it was time for me to go and seek ventures elsewhere.

When and why did you decide it was time for a career transition?

I had completed my full colour service of 22 years and had the opportunity of extending my service by 24 months or apply for a commission to an LE Captain; however, I always told myself that once my service was up regardless of rank or personal circumstances, it was time to go and be thankful for what I had achieved. In my final couple of years of service, I relished the thought of new opportunities and challenges.

Being a Warrant Officer (RQMS) in the army is very different to what you are doing now with Star Refrigeration – how did this career move come about?

Well it was pure chance and fate! I did not have a clue what I wanted to do on leaving the Armed Forces; in fact it was probably the hardest decision I have ever had to make. I have always been interested in engineering and had a basic mechanical knowledge due to my early driving days in the army, carrying out maintenance on a variety of vehicles and weapon systems.

During my resettlement I had done some research into engineering and at that point I was still scratching my head to which industry I wanted to go work in, at which point I bumped into an old friend from school who is working as an air conditioning engineer and he suggested the refrigeration industry.

Q & A



STEVEN ABBOTT RESETTLEMENT STORY

I had never heard of the refrigeration service industry at this stage, however I did not rest on my laurels and I began researching the industry. My journey began as I accidentally came across Star Refrigeration's eLearning website (www.i-know.com) and their free training. I gave it a go and I was hooked, I said to myself "this is right up my street" and I was really interested and challenged from the offset. I knew that Star Refrigeration was a company that I wanted to pursue and that I would have to put the effort in prior to applying as I had no experience.

I completed a refrigeration resettlement course and wilfully gained some work experience with a local refrigeration contractor (unpaid) so that I could gain the necessary experience to give myself the best chance of gaining employment in the industry. My eyes were firmly focused on Star Refrigeration due to their reputation and attractive employee package. I applied for Star Refrigeration a couple of months prior to leaving the Armed Forces and I was lucky enough to be offered a position at the Newcastle branch as a fast-track engineer, for which I am eternally grateful.

Had you always shown an interest in industrial refrigeration?

I had never heard of industrial refrigeration. When I looked into the industry I couldn't believe the scale of it - refrigeration is needed everywhere.

What were the biggest changes you noticed when you moved from the army to Star?

The biggest change and challenge to me was the transition to civilian work. I was very anxious and overwhelmed at the prospect of starting again from the bottom - I even contemplated retiring.

To be honest it was all in my head, the staff at Star Refrigeration took me under their wing and from the start I was treated fairly and with dignity. Dave Bartlett, the Operations Training Manager at Star Refrigeration, put me at ease instantly being ex forces himself, so he got it. Dave understands the personal challenges that many individuals experience during their transition to civilian working life. I have now completed my training and transition, and I don't look back, but instead look forward to the future, working for the Star Refrigeration group of companies.

What skills were you able to carry over from your role in the army to your career with Star Refrigeration?

I was able to carry over my basic knowledge and technical mechanical skills that I remembered from my younger days. However, in the Armed Forces, military personnel obtain many skills that are transferable to the refrigeration industry whether you have mechanical or electrical knowledge or not. Many military personnel are disciplined, take a steadfast approach, work methodically, demonstrate due diligence and deliver unquestionable professionalism. All these qualities and more are transferable to the industrial refrigeration industry and more importantly Star Refrigeration.

You started off as a fast-track engineer at Star and you are now an Industrial Refrigeration Engineer. Please tell us about your journey and how long it has taken you to get where you are.

The training has been both challenging and refreshing and like everything in life, you get what you put in. Once you get the basics and build on those fundamentals everything locks into place, from time to time you get that eureka moment in which you feel instant gratification and a sense of achievement. It took me about 18 months to complete my training. I am proud of my achievements and I feel a similar sense of belonging to when I was serving in the military.

Please tell us a bit about your job. What type of work do you do on a daily basis? Perhaps you can take us through 'A day in the life of an industrial refrigeration engineer'.



On a daily basis I am tasked to carry out service and maintenance on the refrigeration plants of the largest retailers, logistics, pharmaceutical and petrochemical customers in the world. I am based at Star's Newcastle branch - the company has nine branches across the UK- and I supply services to customers within the area. One day I could be recording plant data and observing its characteristics and the following day I could be replacing a fan motor or oil pump. Not one day is the same and it keeps me interested and challenged.

What advice would you give to anyone who is switching from a career in the army to one in a completely different industry such as refrigeration?

Don't be hung up on the thought of "Am I good enough?" You are good enough. Apply yourself, remember the military values and standards and just go for it. Before you know it you will have achieved what you set out to accomplish.

What tips can you give to your job seeking ex-colleagues?

Do your research, put yourself out there, network and be confident in your abilities. Most importantly, make a decision and stick to it ■



Star Refrigeration are the leading industrial refrigeration contractors in the UK. We provide services including new equipment/installations, maintenance, service, spares, retrofits and consultancy.



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Steven Abbott - Refrigeration Engineer

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