STEPNELL
COMPLETE CONSTRUCTION PARTNER

Navigating the Realities of the Modern Workplace

How Stepnell's 'Teamship' philosophy, commercial realism and academic partnership build workplace-ready graduates.

About Stepnell



Who We Are

A family-owned complete construction, property, and energy group operating across Central, Southern and Western England.

Specialist Expertise

Construction, Step Energy, Stepnell Developments, properties, Lawford bespoke joinery, concrete repairs and plant & fleet operations.

Core Delivery Sectors

Healthcare, education (all), commercial, residential, heritage restorations, blue light, Industrial, healthcare, leisure, care, public and private sectors and student accommodation.

Our Portsmouth Partnership

Proud to have refurbished the Spinnaker Building, sponsored the Student Impact Awards, and welcomed Portsmouth students and graduates across our teams.

What we expect when a graduate enters the workplace

Technical & Professional Fundamentals

Everyday Professional Skills & Interpersonal Skills

Mindset, Adaptability

Curiosity



How we select graduate talent

We don't hire CVs, we hire potential, curiosity and practical problem-solvers.



Early Engagement, Not One-Off Hiring

Building multi-year relationships through placements, internships, and partnerships for a natural transition into graduate roles.

Potential Over CV Checklists

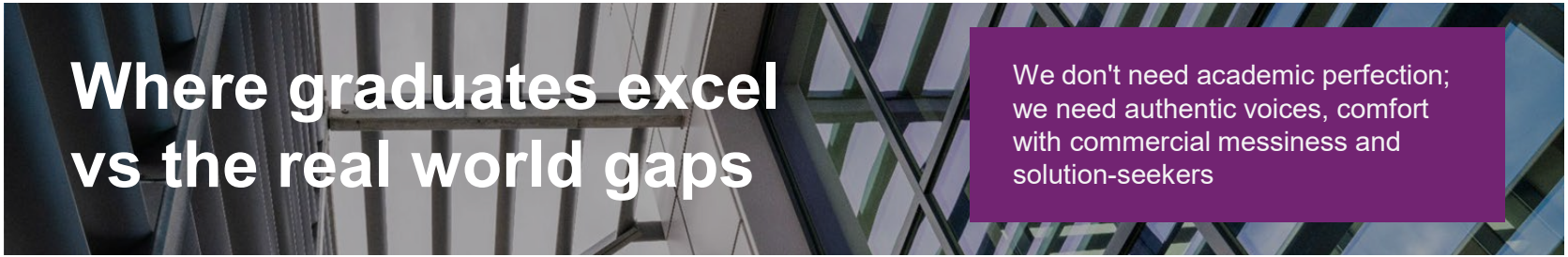
Looking beyond technical ticks to evaluate self-awareness, active listening, genuine curiosity, and capacity to grow.

Practical & Situational Assessment

Evaluating real-world problem-solving and critical thinking rather than textbook definitions.

Smart Tech & AI Literacy

Testing critical judgment and practical tool usage (Procore, Google ecosystem) rather than prompt-writing tricks.



Where graduates excel vs the real world gaps

We don't need academic perfection; we need authentic voices, comfort with commercial messiness and solution-seekers

The Strengths

Intuitive Digital Fluency

Fearless with technology; rapidly adopting platforms like Procore, 3D modelling and data systems.

Purpose & ESG Engagement

Deep, authentic passion for sustainability, social value and net-zero targets (vital for modern clients and **Step Energy**).

Appetite to Contribute

Eager to make an immediate, positive mark on high-profile schemes.

The Gaps & Growth Areas

The 'AI Polish' vs. Authenticity Gap

Polished AI applications that lack voice and local project insight. A slightly raw, authentic application beats generic AI perfection.

Clean Theory vs. Commercial Ambiguity

University coursework has clear answers; the real workplace is messy. Graduates struggle when material prices spike or client briefs shift mid-stream.

Waiting for Direction vs. Solution-Seeking

A tendency to wait for step-by-step instructions rather than testing assumptions and bringing two proposed solutions under Teamship.

And of course.. Experience

Our advice to students on how to stand out

Tell your students: degree modules provide the platform, but real-world customer service and collaborative grit secure the job.

Seek Diverse Exposure Early

Encourage placement years, summer internships, site visits, and enterprise schemes like the **Portsmouth Award**. Early industry mileage builds commercial fluency.

Never Downplay Part-Time Work

Storytelling Teamship

Evidence of collective problem-solving and navigating project hiccups beats a list of academic grades every time.

THE Portsmouth Award.



Our recommendations to help prepare for workplace ready graduates

Co-Design Interventions With Students

Apply the ‘Teamship’ principle internally. When workshops and initiatives are designed alongside students rather than for them.

Embed Live Industry Briefs Early

Partner with contractors like Stepnell to bring live tenders, design clashes, and carbon constraints into foundational modules.

Simulate Imperfect Scenarios

Move beyond neat, predictable case studies. Change project parameters or budgets halfway through an assignment to teach resilience, pivoting, and communication under pressure.

Flexible, Agile Placement Models



A Three-Way Partnership, Not a Transaction

Move from transactional delivery to becoming an active partner to the student. From initial admissions through to graduation, every touchpoint should feel collaborative and supportive.

Bridging campus and industry

Employability is a genuine three-way partnership, Student, University and Employer. When we treat the student experience as a shared journey rather than an administrative transaction, workplace-ready talent follows.





1. **Hire for Mindset, Train for Skill**
   Curiosity and team agility outweigh polished, generic CVs.
2. **Value All Experience**
   Part-time customer service and placements teach conflict resolution and commercial grit.
3. **Design Together**
   Involve students and employers in shaping School Employability Plans.
4. **Shift from Transaction to Partnership**
   Elevate the entire student experience into a collaborative relationship that delivers measurable Graduate Outcomes.

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Thank you

At Stepnell, we are proud of our ongoing relationship with the University of Portsmouth. Thank you for inviting us to speak today.

www.stepnell.co.uk | **Speaker: Rob Speirs**