

SPOTLIGHT

ON MELISSA EAST



Angela Wilkins shines a light on our very own Shawston squad via the Spotlight series, a series of informal chats with key members of staff talking candidly about their roles within the Shawston group and how they have developed. It's simple really, aim the light and watch them shine.

Quietly beavering away in the purchasing department of our Head Office sits Melissa. A true example of strength and inspiration, although you'd never know it unless you knew her back story. Always moving forwards, overcoming whatever hurdle is in her path, Melissa is a real survivor. Well, excitingly today I get the chance to shine the Shawston spotlight on one of our quieter members of the Shawston family, Melissa, who is an inspiration to us all, both in her personal achievements and her

work accomplishments. This girl most definitely can.

Background

Another day, another chance for me listen to the career journey of one of our special family members. Shining the spotlight on these brilliant individuals is fast becoming the highlight of my week, more so because in these current times when the majority of us are home based it's becoming increasingly

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important to keep in touch and these weekly chats are certainly an uplifting part of my working week.

Melissa is different to most, I say that because although most of us have been touched by cancer in some way or another, mostly through friends or relatives, thankfully most of us haven't suffered from it directly. This is why Melissa is such a captivating person, having faced the ultimate battle against cancer at only 23 Melissa fought her way to recovery and set about picking up her career from where she left off, she is now Head of Purchasing of the Shawston Group. I really did mean it when I said earlier this girl definitely can....

Melissa on Shawston

After leaving college with my accountancy qualification I was finding it tough to get a job. The story is a familiar one, I was qualified but with no actual real experience, and without experience a lot of companies were reluctant to take me on. Luckily for me, my mum's best friend is the sister of Mandy Collins who happened to mention that her company Shawston were looking to take someone on part time in the purchasing team. I started at Shawston in 2015 carrying out a split role, working for Tipton Jones (now Shawston Steel Tube) half of my time and the Shawston purchasing team for the other half. I think I felt more pressure to prove myself because of the way in which I got the job, I didn't want to let anyone down!

I was soon offered a full-time role which corresponded with a move to the Head Office in Manchester. I was always honest about where I wanted to go, even when I first started. I remember saying to Mandy at the time "One day hopefully I'll have your job Mandy!" Soon enough Mandy moved across to Credit Control

and I was asked if I wanted to head up the Central Purchasing team – "Yeah definitely!" To be honest I didn't think I'd get the job that quick. I always thought I might get made Head of Central Purchasing when Mandy retired or dropped days, but I was delighted to be given the chance to head up the team. That was in 2019 and I haven't looked back since.

Melissa on Share Ownership

My work ethic has always been the same, I've always tried to do my best, so that's not changed. Mandy always said to me when I first started "Treat it as if it's your own money" and if I did something she would say "Well would you do that with your own money?" Obviously working in central purchasing you want to get the best price, you don't want to pay carriage on an order so you're always thinking along those lines, you want to do better buying here, there and everywhere. I've always been the same. Invested from day one.

If you've got a can-do attitude then Shawston will help you do it. That's the beauty of Shawston

I am really proud to own part of Shawston. Although I started off with a small investment, my confidence has grown so much I now buy every year on dealing day. Where else would you get the chance to own part of a company? It's such a great opportunity, but it's not just about being a co-owner. There is so much support on offer here from the top to the bottom, Shawston really invest in you as people, the company is full of normal, genuinely nice people which stems from the top, from Rob and Michelle, and runs through the culture of the entire company. I remember the support I got from everyone when I was poorly, I

had such nice messages and encouragement from the people in the warehouse to the members of the board. It made such a difference and I really don't think that would have happened in a PLC. Amazing. There is a real family feeling at Shawston, everyone cares and looks out for each other.

Melissa on Mentorship

Without a doubt my biggest influencer has got to be Mandy Collins, everything I've learnt has been through Mandy, everything she knew she told me about. Mandy isn't the sort of person to withhold information that would help the team do our job better. She is so encouraging, there was an open forum in the office, and we could all ask her anything we wanted, at any time. That was so empowering, between Mandy and Mark Dyer I couldn't have asked

for better role models at work.

Greatest Achievement

Definitely when I was offered the role of Head of Central Purchasing, that's got to be the best one so far. I was so proud to be given the opportunity to help others and influence the team using the skills that have been taught to me by my mentors. Helping to bring people on within the team isn't just in the interest of the company, it's also in the interest of myself and of my other co-owners. A really great moment for me.

No Barriers

There is absolutely no micromanaging here. Central Purchasing is fast paced so it's brilliant that



you can make your own decisions, we wouldn't be able to do our jobs properly if we had to keep checking and asking for permission. And even if you make a wrong decision you are still supported, you just learn for next time. It's brilliant having that support, it makes for a nice working environment.

Melissa on the Future

I'm not going anywhere! There are so many opportunities here and I'm open to them all, open to change, open to learn more and open for my future. I remember back in 2016 when I was ill, I was offered a role in the new accounts department that was being set up. For me personally it wasn't the right time. I was quite poorly, and a new office, new people and time off to manage my illness wouldn't

have been fair for me or for Shawston, but I was still so grateful for the offer.

The amazing thing about working at Shawston is that your talent is recognised. It's a two way street, you recognise that you want to move on and they (Shawston) recognise that you can move on and they want you to, they want to help you fulfil your potential. It doesn't get much better than that.

We see it here all the time, take James Collins for example, he started out screwing pipe in the warehouse and look at him now (James is now the Managing Director of Shawston International Ltd). It's amazing! If you've got a can-do attitude, Shawston will help you do it. That's the beauty of Shawston.◆



Shawston has so many more amazing examples of meritocracy – sponsorship of MBA's, graduate development schemes, and a strong record for internal promotion to name just a few. And the common theme is that all these people made a choice – the choice to improve, to be better, to progress, and to shine. And that's the essence of Employee Ownership. We encourage a freedom of expression rarely seen in business, we push people to be better versions of themselves, and we give them the space to make choices.

So, if you're interested in a career with Shawston, make the choice to email us your cv and a covering letter to hr@shawston.co.uk or [visit our website](#) to read more about choosing to hop on board to a new career.