

**What has Lewis been up to at Festo?**

Recently at Festo I have led the design, build and programming of a fully operational capping and de-capping rig used in a medical environment. I was responsible for the full development process, from mechanical CAD and electrical integration to writing the PLC code and physically assembling the unit. This project allowed me to apply and develop a wide range of skills while delivering something functional and robust that could be demonstrated to both internal teams and external stakeholders.

Beyond this project, I have been supporting the Customer Solutions department with the development of bespoke automation concepts for our customers. This involves contributing to initial designs, exploring feasibility, and assisting with presentations to demonstrate how Festo's technologies can be tailored to specific needs. These tasks have brought me closer to customers and given me insight into the commercial side of engineering — including how solutions are designed, costed and integrated.

I have also become more involved in customer visits and technical discussions. I regularly attend site meetings with machine builders and end users to understand their automation challenges and show them what is possible with Festo's product range. This direct involvement has helped build my communication skills and made me more confident when discussing complex systems with external teams.

**Lewis, what are your future plans and longer term career vision?**

In the future, I want to keep building my technical knowledge by working on more advanced automation and systems integration projects. I want to get to the point where I can confidently solve problems across mechanical, electrical and software disciplines. I also want to better understand the full journey of a solution — from the first idea, through design and manufacture, to testing and real world use. Getting more involved with customer requirements, project planning and how decisions are made commercially will help me become a more rounded engineer. Over time, I'd like to take on more responsibility for delivering complete solutions, ideally in a product-focused role where I can have input on both the technical design and how it is introduced to the market.

**How are you supporting other or younger apprentices?**

One of the most rewarding parts of my role is helping new apprentices settle in and make the most of their placements. I regularly support others by showing them how to navigate Festo's internal processes, helping with CAD models and design work, and offering guidance on how to manage time and tasks across different departments. I also try to be someone they can turn to for questions —such as preparing for Worldskills or other technical or challenging parts of the apprenticeship.

I help run parts of our work experience programme too, making sure visiting students are given real engineering tasks to work on, not just observation. I take pride in giving them something they can learn from, so they leave with a better understanding of what this career path can offer.

**What sort of ambassadorial role have you been playing?**

I have taken many opportunities over the last year to speak at careers days and student outreach events. I talk honestly about my own journey and how an apprenticeship has opened a serious engineering career for me, not just an alternative to university, but a route with real depth and opportunity.

At events like these, I make a point of highlighting the variety within engineering, especially in automation. I explain how roles like mine include everything from programming and design to hands on assembly and customer interaction. I think it's important to give young people a realistic picture of what engineering involves, but also to show how exciting and creative it can be.

Being part of the BEST programme gave me an even bigger platform to promote vocational pathways. Through it, I have grown personally and professionally, and I now use that visibility to encourage others to pursue similar opportunities. Whether it is guiding work experience students, mentoring apprentices, or representing Festo at external events, I aim to shift perceptions and show that success in engineering can come from many starting points.