



Neil Marsons

Global Purchasing Director – Chassis, Supply Chain Design & Global Sourcing Strategy at Jaguar Land Rover



Neil is accountable for chassis systems and commodities across all Jaguar and Land Rover vehicles. In addition, he is accountable for all supply chain design activity for Jaguar Land Rover, ensuring all inbound value chains to Jaguar Land Rover are designed and optimised to deliver world-class levels of performance. Neil is also globally responsible for the strategic sourcing direction of Jaguar Land Rover.

School life

Neil grew up in Bell Green, Coventry, and attended Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School before progressing to Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School where he was until taking his GCSEs in 1996. He followed in the footsteps of his mother and father who also went to Cardinal Wiseman, with his younger sister Marie and a number of cousins also attending the school.

Neil said: "I would describe my time at Cardinal Wiseman as the best years of my life. I made lots of good friends, many of which I'm still in contact with today, and I learnt a lot – not just from an educational perspective, but also about life.

"I mixed with a very diverse group of people from different parts of the city and there was a lot of sport and socialising, but it was tough. There was a good atmosphere in the school, however it was very much focused on hard work - but at the end of the day you get out what you put in and I had a truly enjoyable experience at Cardinal Wiseman.

"My favourite subject was business studies. When I was at school all of the girls wanted to be a model and all of the boys wanted to be a footballer, and I remember saying I wanted to be a production manager at a car company which was quite a strange ambition for a 14-year-old lad.

"At the time my dad and my uncle worked at Massey Ferguson and I did work experience there when I was at Wiseman but I wasn't over enamoured with tractors, I preferred cars. I had my heart set on getting into the automotive industry at an early age."

Looking back at his fondest memories of the school, Neil recalled a religious retreat to Stratford in Year 10 and an end of year show in Year 11 in which he and his friends performed a Take That tribute and he also did an Oasis solo, admitting that he hadn't done karaoke since!

Speaking about the support he received from the school, Neil added: "The school definitely helped give me clarity of thought in terms of the career path I



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wanted to take. It put me in good stead for the future through the education and environment it provided.

"A lot of people at the school wanted me to stay and complete my A-levels after my GCSEs, but I wanted to do an apprenticeship. Even after I'd formally left, there were still quite a few discussions on whether I should stay and make my transition into industry at a later date.

"Those discussions demonstrated the pastoral care from the school and showed that even after leaving, everyone wanted the best for me and my future."

Career

Neil left Cardinal Wiseman at 16 and was offered a number of apprenticeships in and around the area. He chose a three-year commercial apprenticeship at Dunlop, in Coventry - a component supplier into the automation industry.

It saw him take on a variety of tough jobs on the shop floor and attend college one day a week. He completed an ONC, an NVQ Level 2 in both business and engineering and an NVQ 3 in business, before completing a Higher National Certificate, which is the equivalent of half a degree.

Neil said: "When I finished my apprenticeship I started my degree three nights a week at Coventry University. Thereafter I moved to the Rover Group, which latterly became MG Rover, which Dunlop were a supplier to. I worked in Longbridge, in Birmingham, and it was the start of the next level of my career.

"I worked in launching new cars, logistics, manufacturing and also in purchasing. It was fantastic for me - really hard work, but I learnt an awful lot.

"Sadly that company went bust in 2005 and I was there right to the end. It was a career-defining moment for me, a young lad at 25-years-old and I'd just been made the youngest manager in Rover at the time.

"It actually turned out to be a big opportunity for me as I went to work for Honda, in Swindon, and thereafter I worked at Rolls-Royce Aerospace, in Derby and Nottingham, in various different disciplines. I did a Master's Degree in Engineering Business Management at Warwick University and travelled the world as part of my job."

Neil joined Jaguar Land Rover in 2012 as a senior purchasing manager where he was in charge of buying every interior of every Jaguar and Land Rover vehicle.

He said: "I was in charge of around £1.8 billion worth of spend and a team of about 60 people. In 2015 I was promoted to a director and took on a number of different responsibilities and moved areas.

"I now look after the purchasing of all of the chassis components for the vehicles manufactured everywhere in the world. I also look after the supply chain design which is about making sure that wherever we build cars we have the most cost effective and lean supply chains.

"It's amazing that a young lad from Bell Green has managed to work his way up to a senior position in quite a big globally-renowned company. It just shows that no matter what your background you can succeed, and Cardinal Wiseman helped me get where I am today. I feel very privileged and very proud of that fact."

Advice to current pupils

Neil said: "The biggest piece of advice that I could give anyone would be to work hard, but it also helps if you're passionate about something. I often speak to our graduates about the cocktail of success - passion will only get you so far, but when you have passion and hard work, then you've got the cocktail for success."



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