

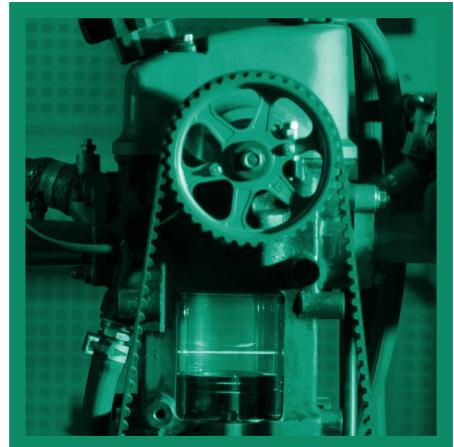
## Case Study: Alumni

**Mark, BSc Physics & MSc Applied Optics**

**Graduation Year: 1995**

**Job Title:** Senior Optical Design Engineer

**Employer:** Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd.



### What has been your career path up until now?

My career has been completely unplanned and rather like a random walk. During my time at IC, I was sponsored by EEV Ltd. (now e2v) in Chelmsford. When I graduated, I found that through the course, I made contacts which gave me the opportunity to work at the UK astronomy facilities in the Canary Islands while doing a PhD (sadly not at IC). The attraction of the adventure pulled me down this path; when I finished I was hired by the IT industry based on my computing skills acquired as a practicing physicist. This was to last two years, when, due to a conference I attended, I found a position as a lecturer in Puerto Rico, of all places. Although the experience of being an academic was great, I changed profession again a few years later when I had the chance to join one of the UK's high flying small companies as an optical systems engineer, where I have stayed.

**“My career has been completely unplanned and rather like a random walk.”**

- Mark

### Do you use skills that you obtained during your Imperial course?

At one time or another I have used every skill that I learnt from IC. Moreover, I have used the connections from IC in my professional life and they are just as important as the course knowledge.

### Name 3 things you like about your job

As a systems engineer for space borne optical instruments, I find the three things I like about the job are the variety, the international scope of the business and the romance of the subject.

### Anything you are less keen on?

I am definitely less keen on the politics involved in obtaining and keeping business going and the international protectionism involved in the space industry.

### Did you choose your course with this particular occupation in mind?

I chose the Physics BSc and the Applied Optics MSc not based on my objective occupation (I never had one of those!) but instead on following what I found to be interesting.



### **What part of your course did you particularly enjoy?**

The best parts of the courses were the options available, and the Erasmus programme! I developed technical skills that have served me in good stead.

### **What skills did you develop within your degree that you find useful in your present role?**

Something that I did not learn from IC, but came as a result of being a sponsored student was management of technical teams.

### **Did you gain work experience or an internship whilst at ICL?**

I found that it was also important to try and become involved in the Undergraduate Research Opportunities (UROP) scheme available at IC at the time, as that taught me how a research group operates.

### **Could you give us one or more career tips for Imperial graduates?**

Things that I wish I had known/done as a student:

- An internship at a national/international research facility and not just worked as a sponsored student at a company during vacation periods.
- Participated more with societies and clubs, since some of the friendships you make can continue for the rest of your life.
- Looked to adopt a mentor from amongst the faculty, e.g. more experienced postdocs. This can shortcut the learning curve when it comes to finding a job in a related field.

General Tips:

- Do what you feel is right for you at the time and don't attempt to force yourself to go down a professional route that you don't fully enjoy.
- Get as much experience through internships/volunteer work as you can during your time at IC. This will always reflect well with potential employers.

