



National Careers Week Karan Sharkey | Commercial Director

Karan Sharkey, Commercial Director Scotland, shares her career journey with us for National Careers Week - from Technical Support Chemist to Commercial Director.

Can you share a little about your career journey and how you got to where you are today?

The environmental sector wasn't my original career choice, and I fell into it by accident, however I'm delighted that I joined the sector. I started my career as a Technical Support Chemist, working with clients to identify, segregate and package hazardous waste for treatment at one of our facilities in Scotland before moving on to a commercial role one year later. Whilst the move was daunting, I finally realised my passion was in sales, with my technical mind set I found it extremely satisfying working with clients to offer innovative solutions to their waste challenges.

From there I progressed into managing a small team of project managers working on large scale projects such as Lagoon Cleaning, Plant shutdowns and project work within the water industry which has always been the most exciting part of my career to date, and this continues to be a key growth area for Enva Scotland.

My experience in hazardous waste sales and project management led me to lead the commercial function in the hazardous waste division of Scotland before learning the Recycling sector 5 years ago assuming responsibility for new business alongside the Commercial management of the hazardous division. Two years ago, I progressed to Commercial Director of Scotland having full commercial responsibility for Recycling, Hazardous and Organics Recycling in Scotland.

What inspired you to pursue this career path?

To be honest it was a chance opportunity, I was working in hospitality with a chemistry degree and a chance meeting gave me the opportunity to join this sector and I've never looked back.

What advice would you give to someone looking to enter the recycling industry?

Do it! I would say a problem-solving mind is a must, legislation is ever evolving and having the ability to adapt to change is also key.

How do you see your industry evolving in the next five years?

Circularity and Sustainability is at the forefront of all customers minds, Waste to Product is the focus and the industry is ever evolving with a view of creating valuable resources from waste – at Enva we like to look at problematic waste streams and how they can be treated to create a valuable resource whilst reducing the demand for virgin materials and protecting the world's finite resources.

If you could go back and give your younger self career advice, what would it be?

Join the industry sooner - it's very fast paced, exciting whilst challenging, a growing sector and a career for life!

What does a typical day look like for you in your role?

Morning meetings reviewing safety and the previous day's performance to budget, catching up with the Heads of Department to focus on the week ahead priorities, Client meetings, Finance forecasting, writing Tenders and reviewing cost models.

What skills and qualifications are most important for someone in your field?

Positivity, personable, motivational, enthusiasm, problem solving mind set, adaptable to change, tenacity and a technical background.

Thank you, Karan!