



Profiles of Electrical Engineers



Gertjan van Stam
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EDUCATION	▶ BSc Hogeschool Utrecht
JOB DESCRIPTION	Leader at Macha Works, involved in rolling out of Internet in rural areas in Africa, edifying local talent, and engendering community driven projects.
ADVICE TO STUDENTS	At all times dream, take time and learn to observe, value input from any point of view, explore and develop personal checks and balances.

▶ INTERVIEW SEGMENTS

▶ **Q: When did you know you wanted to become an Engineer?**

▶ **van Stam:** At an early age I was intrigued by wireless communication, radio. Started to work with electronics, making circuits, and started engineering education at the middle level school -- vocational education.

▶ **Q: Did you incorporate work experiences while you were an undergraduate student?**

▶ **van Stam:** Yes, I have been always working, even during school periods and during school holidays, in various temporary jobs. From manual labour to engineering work to make local area networks during the early days.

▶ **Q: How did you get your first job?**

▶ **van Stam:** Through contacts. Actually I have never applied for a job in my life. Just by being active, doing things, innovating and achieving one comes into contact with people... Actually, my first job came out of thesis work for my degree.

▶ **Q: What's the most rewarding thing about being an Engineer?**

▶ **van Stam:** To make sort of sense of it all, to be able to analyse, gather resources and create. To make something new, to build something up, to be instrumental for others to excel.

▶ **Q: Is there an example you can provide that shows how something you've worked on has positively impacted the world?**

▶ **van Stam:** ...Actually, I see all my performances as having had a positive impact to the world, even if it was relatively small or obscure. I have had the privilege to work in strategic developments. And working in communications is just a great thing, as it facilitates people to connect with each other, and what is more beautiful than that?

Q: Do you spend a fair amount of time traveling?

▶ **van Stam:** Yes, lots of it, in the small plane of Flying Mission over rural Africa, or in big jets in between countries and continents. Actually, living in rural Africa means traveling as even most of our shops are already over 300 km away.

▶ **Q: Do you have a mentor? Or did you in your college years?**

▶ **van Stam:** Yes, I always have had mentors, as one is never too old to learn, it is important to put oneself in a position of accountability, under authority, even if one invites someone to be accountable to. I have always interacted with more knowledgeable persons during my studies, as to learn from them and to get advice on how to embrace and overcome challenges.

▶ **Q: Do you find yourself working more in a team situation, or more alone?**

▶ **van Stam:** Typically always in teams, but still one can be alone as in his/her expertise or unique contribution. In general, work is about being in contact with others, together we can do more than one, we complement and help each other.

▶ **Q: Do you find you are able to balance work with social/family life while working in your current job?**

▶ **van Stam:** In the current, connected, multi faceted world it might be difficult to distinguish clear cut differences between one and the other. Of course, the most important sphere of influence and relationships is my family. And in a resource limited, inclusive environment, where the effects are disastrous, demands on one's time can be overwhelming. Shared vision is helpful, so the environment knows what are the priorities and ethics guide one's choices...

▶ **Q: Did you think that school prepared you for the way the work gets done in the real world?**

▶ **van Stam:** Yes, especially where it allowed for organizing with colleagues/students to do extracurricular activities. It was a good environment to experiment and find like minded people with which to team up.

▶ **Q: Where do you see jobs for Engineers in the future? What should students be doing to prepare themselves to take on those roles?**

▶ **van Stam:** Everywhere! But they are multi-disciplinary, and will involve personal ethics more and more as to be aware of the effects for the environment, society, and the common good(s). Thus students should follow their dreams, be innovative, and try to work in multi-disciplinary teams to assure being in touch with other skills then as what normally would be connected with engineering.

▶ **Q: What other advice do you have for students?**

▶ **van Stam:** At all times dream, take time and learn to observe, value input from any point of view, explore and develop personal checks and balances.

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