

Geophysicist

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As part of its work on careers promotion, IMCA has been talking to a variety of offshore personnel about how they became involved in the offshore industry and various aspects of their work. In this article we learn from a geophysicist who began work in 1996, having gained a degree in geophysics.



What attracted you to being a survey geophysicist?

I thought that working in the oil and gas industry would provide an exciting and challenging career, with endless opportunities to experience and be part of the well-recognised innovation and advanced technology associated with the industry.

What work experience have you gained since joining the industry?

For a number of years I worked in the office for a major oil company and then for various offshore survey contractors, interpreting seismic data and high-resolution site survey data, before moving onshore as a vessel-based geophysicist. My main duties offshore were quality control during data acquisition and offline interpretation of data and report writing. The vessels I worked on were conducting ROV pipeline inspection, site surveys and light offshore construction. I had to work to tight deadlines, develop good communication skills and liaise well with other personnel and the client.

What was your first role when you started in the industry?

Following my education at university and some work experience with an oil company in Aberdeen, I started work “straight in at the deep end” in the ROV/offshore survey business as a freelance geophysicist. I spent approximately three years doing this, alternating work between three survey companies. I took a full time staff position with one of IMCA’s International Contractor (ICO) members in December 2000 and at present am working offshore as a senior geophysicist.

What do you like most about working offshore?

Many modern survey vessels are new builds and so are very well appointed and pleasant working environments. Also, I get to work with some amazing technology and friendly people whilst offshore. Financial reward plays a part, as does travel to far-away locations, with a work schedule that allows plenty of time off.

Why would you recommend this career to others?

For the ambitious, the broad knowledge gained as a geophysicist in the offshore ROV and survey industry is appropriate and valuable for promotion to management. With enthusiasm and hard work, there are endless opportunities out there. The job should bring variety and opportunities to travel and to meet people from a wide spectrum of life, as well as financial rewards and progress to senior level.



What opportunities have you had to travel?

My first trip offshore was to Bergen in Norway and then north through breath-taking scenery to Hammerfest, the most northerly town in the world, where we saw the Northern Lights. I have worked in the south Atlantic, visited Angola and flown across the Niger delta by helicopter. I’ve done pipeline inspection work in the Mediterranean, between Sicily and Tunisia, and worked extensively around Norway and Scotland.

What have been the highlights of your career so far?

Rapid promotion to senior geophysicist; seeing many amazing sights of the natural world – hundreds of dolphins offshore Angola and the scenery of northern Norway to name but two – and working aboard the newest survey vessel in our fleet.