

Data Processor

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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 data processor who came from a background in economics to join the industry in 1991.



What attracted you to being a survey data processor?

After travelling around the world, I needed a job. I got an interview for a position as a data processor and the skills I had in producing reports and in working with numbers meant that I could be retrained for the role. Following a three month probationary period, I got a 50% pay rise and a guarantee of 150 days work per year.

What work experience have you gained since joining the industry?

Over the last 14 years I have worked offshore for a number of companies as a processor/senior processor/reports co-ordinator and offshore technical rep. I've worked on jobs for just about every major operator, on dozens of vessels, in every type of weather imaginable, and on most types of survey and construction jobs.

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

Initially I went offshore as a trainee data processor. I had to learn absolutely everything from scratch from experienced people around me, as I knew absolutely nothing about the industry – about working on a ship, about computers and about what we were trying to do as a survey team.

What do you like most about working offshore?

For me, the advantages of working offshore were that you get reasonably well paid and there was always plenty of time onshore at the end of it. Also, I've always liked the fact that we can spend millions of pounds on getting pipes on the seabed or gathering data about the status of the seabed, but the quality of what is passed to the client is down to how well the data collected is interpreted and reported – and that was part of my work. Also, in the last 14 years the level of technology at our disposal to process and interpret data has changed dramatically, adding to the challenge of getting to know, understand and use new technology.



Why would you recommend this career to others?

The oil industry is a dramatic industry. For me, it's far more challenging and interesting than, say, accountancy or teaching; than being a paper-pushing middle manager or a sales executive. The money is pretty good, the chance to move between disciplines is available to almost all, there is loads of in-house training, plenty of chances to travel and plenty of time off to spend as you see fit. Overall, I've stayed in the industry because of the varied work, the time off, the money and the people I'm working with.

What opportunities have you had to travel?

I've worked mostly in the North Sea, visiting the Shetlands, Norway, Denmark, France and Holland. In the Mediterranean I've worked in Spain and between Sicily and North Africa. Elsewhere in Africa I've worked in Egypt and Nigeria and I've also been in the Arctic Circle and worked at the equator. I've worked with hundreds of different people and enjoyed the company of the vast majority.



What have been the highlights of your career so far?

One highlight was being involved in a small company just starting to build a survey department. Everyone had to be multi-skilled and be willing and able to turn their hand to anything. Hard work for a small number of people, but very challenging and rewarding, as well as great fun. Other highlights so far have mainly been the people I have worked with and the places visited. In what other job can you see such a wide variety of marine wildlife – whales, dolphins, sharks, seals, etc. – and all for free?