

Anthony Robinson

Skill: IT PC & Network Support

From: Sunderland
Competed in: WorldSkills 2005, Helsinki
Result: Certificate of Participation

Qualifications

- 2 A levels
- 1st Class BSc degree in Network Computing
- Cisco CCNP Programme



Ever since he can remember, Anthony has been fascinated with computers. From the age of 9 he was dismantling and re-assembling machines in his spare time. It was no surprise therefore that Anthony decided to pursue IT when he left school at the age of 16 after completing his GCSE's.

Says Anthony,

"I'd always enjoyed IT and Networking, so when I left school I decided to continue studying and went on to do 2 'A' levels in ICT and the Cisco Academy Programme which was being piloted at the City of Sunderland College. This was a new industry certified course being offered and it led on to me doing a foundation degree in Network Computing."

So how did Anthony get involved in competitions?

"I was relatively late to the world of competitions compared to many of my fellow WorldSkills competitors as I didn't get involved until the last year of my foundation degree. Cisco was running a national competition and I was put forward by my college. It turned out to be a great move as despite a shaky start I managed to impress the judges in the two day competition held at Cisco headquarters in London."

It was winning the Cisco competition that led Anthony to gain his place in the UK team for WorldSkills in Finland in 2005.

How did he prepare for the competition?

Anthony explains, "Because I was already studying IT on a full time basis, I was able to assimilate a lot of training for the WorldSkills competition in my everyday life. However, having said that, I did have to work really hard! The intensive six month preparation period for the competition also coincided with my final year of my foundation degree and I found myself working 9am – 9pm most days which was pretty exhausting."

What kind of additional training did Anthony receive?

"Despite the hard work, I have to admit I received first class training for the WorldSkills Competition. The requirements of WorldSkills meant that I had to re-focus my Microsoft training and I did a lot of extra work on this including additional training courses at City of Sunderland College. I also went to Cisco headquarters on work experience for a week which was really useful preparation and very interesting."

In the end I had done so much preparation for the competition I remember feeling that my mind was worn out when I arrived in Finland and I had to rely on my adrenaline to keep me going."

What was WorldSkills like?

Anthony recalls the experience as a complete eye-opener. "It was incredible to see so many people who were all single-minded about achieving ultimate success in their chosen skill. It was great to meet other people who have the same ambitions as you and you could feel the excitement in the air. The opportunities to look around the competition also gave me a full appreciation of just what went on in other competition areas and I was stunned at how different the competitions all were. WorldSkills is one of those events where you have to see it to believe it!"

And how did he cope while competing? Was there anything he didn't expect?

"I was unlucky in that I was actually ill during the whole four days of the competition as I had caught a bad cold shortly after arriving in Finland. I certainly hadn't factored this into account and I think it did mean that my performance was slightly under par. I managed to put it out of my mind while I was competing and I don't remember the time passing by as I was concentrating so hard.

I did make one big mistake which shot away my hopes of winning a medal. On day three of the competition I omitted to save some work which was crucial to the marks. I was horrified because this is something which I never normally do. To this day I don't know why I did it, because it was so out of character – maybe the pressure, the virus, the tiredness who knows. In the end I did surprisingly well all things considered although it's not something I found easy to accept."

What benefits does Anthony feel he gained from his WorldSkills experience?

"I think WorldSkills gave me lots of 'life' skills. The biggest benefit the whole experience gave me was that it opened my eyes to what it is like out there in the world and how much is possible if you put your mind to it. I came back with a much broader more open-minded perspective on life and I learnt a lot about myself. I learnt to prioritise and juggle tasks in a way I'd never done before and I also learnt that sometimes it's better to concentrate on one goal and not try and achieve everything at once because it's just not possible."

And the thing he remembers most about WorldSkills?

"The closing ceremony for the competition will be my lasting memory. I felt so proud to be part of the UK team and the proud look on Andrew Blair's face, our Autobody repair competitor, when he went to collect his gold medal will always stick in my mind."

What has Anthony been doing since taking part in the World's biggest skills competition?

Anthony may not have returned to the UK with a gold medal, but his experiences at WorldSkills made him more determined than ever to succeed. He gained a First in his foundation degree in IT and Network Computing. In 2006 he began working for City of Sunderland College as a Curriculum Support Officer and has continued with his studies to maximise his career opportunities in the future. Says Anthony, "WorldSkills taught me to focus on globally recognised qualifications which is why I want to gain the Cisco CCIE qualification. I am really lucky to be working in the environment which helped me on my way to WorldSkills and I like to think that I am also giving something back."

So does he have any words of wisdom for future competitors?

"Taking part in WorldSkills will give you many life skills and really help to put you ahead of the game. Think really hard about the commitment you will be making as you need to be willing to put 100% into the training and preparation. If you are motivated to do this, WorldSkills will be the best thing you have ever done."

"WorldSkills has to be seen to be believed and the fact that it will take place in the UK in 2011 means that literally thousands of people will have the chance to visit and see what goes on. One of the biggest attractions of WorldSkills is that it provides a global perspective to young people about what types of skills and opportunities exist – something which you can't appreciate without seeing it in action."

For more information, please contact the PR Team, UK Skills: 020 7612 9260