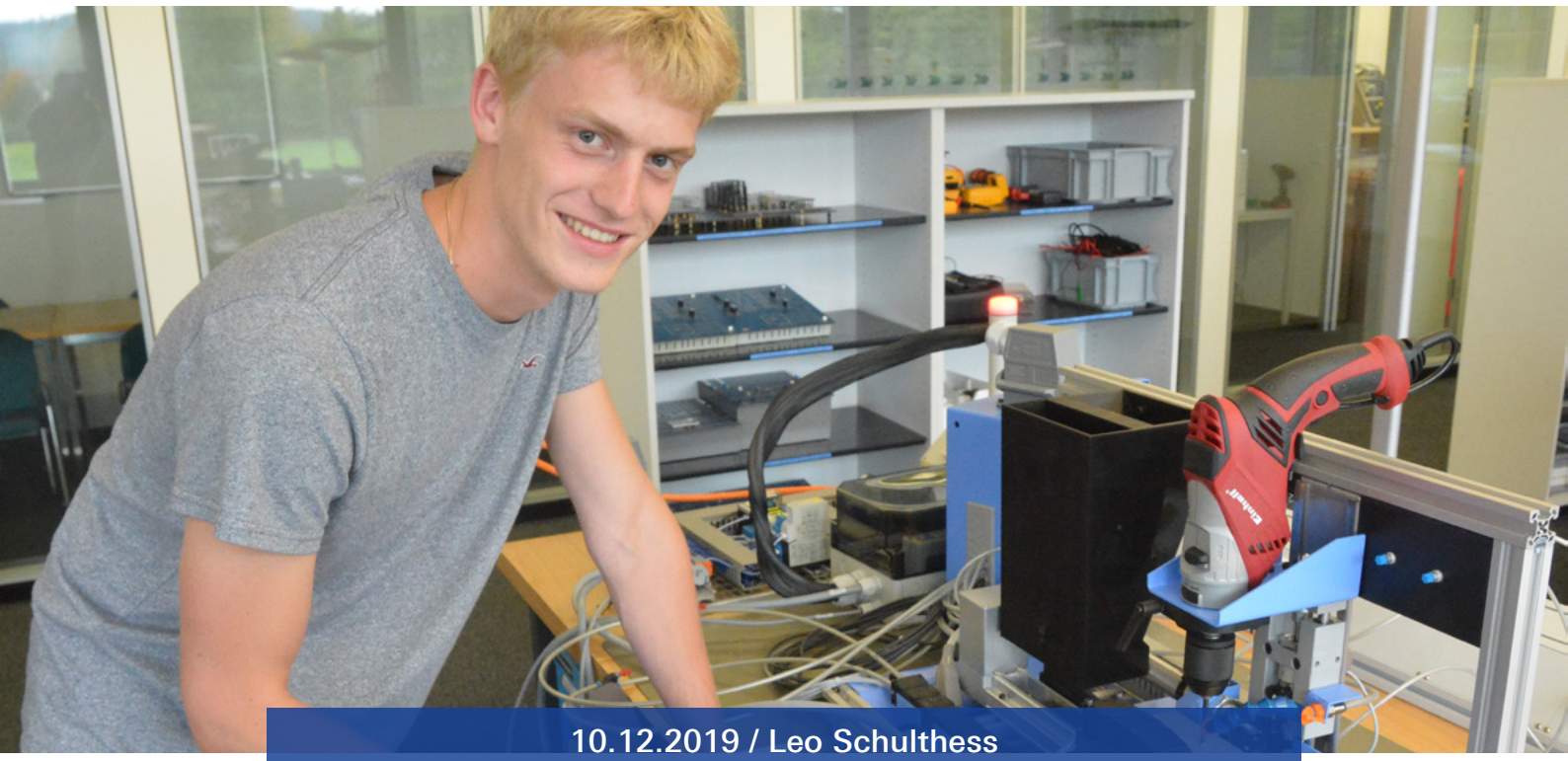

10.12.2019 / Leo Schulthess

“To this day, I don’t regret my career choice – it was a stroke of luck”

I am 18 years young and in my third year of training at Muller Martini to become a design engineer. I enjoy putting ideas into practice and my dream is to invent something one day.

The ability to picture things in space is the be-all and end-all for a design engineer. I don’t think that’s something you can basically learn. To a certain degree, either you have it or you don’t – at best, you can develop, expand and refine it. Designers also need a natural technical interest and understanding, realistic creativity and the ability to analyze problems and come up with solutions.

I always liked drawing. I wanted to become an architect for a long time, until I found out that I first had to do an apprenticeship in structural or civil engineering. At some point, I heard about the profession of a design engineer and loved the idea. Preparing drawings, implementing ideas – that’s what I want to do. I didn’t do a trial apprenticeship in any other profession. I know you’re not supposed to do it that way, but I knew immediately that I wanted to become a design engineer.

That was in the eighth grade of E secondary school, which I attended in Olten. To this day, I don’t regret my career choice. On the contrary, it was a stroke of luck. Now I’m in the third year of my apprenticeship and have been working in the finishing department for several months.

My supervisor gives me assignments with clear tasks every day, which I then complete independently. A lot of times, I make adjustments to existing drawings, and sometimes there are tasks for new designs or special problems to be solved. I'm currently working on an integrated belt, which could be damaged by a sharp sheet edge if it slips. We now need a component that acts as a guard to prevent the belt from rubbing against the edge of the sheet metal. Solving the problem is up to me. As soon as I have come up with my idea, I'll discuss it with my supervisor, and once all the pieces are in place, the project will be implemented.

Now the adventure really begins

Muller Martini has a learning park where I spent the first two years of my apprenticeship. There we acquired a lot of basic knowledge to prepare us for our transition to the various departments. The learning park is a world of its own and therefore a bit removed from reality. Now, in the department we also get to see what it actually costs to realize a given project, for example.

I had great respect for the changeover, especially because so many highly experienced engineers work here. It turned out, I had no reason to be worried and the transition went more smoothly than expected. I have my own workspace and "exciting" work, which is a great incentive. I was also allowed to work on big projects such as designing modifications for a test gearbox, which were then implemented immediately. That's pretty cool! Here they can put me to good use and my profession is really just getting off the ground here.

When choosing a career, I deliberately passed on certain alternatives, but not when looking for the right employer. It quickly became clear that my first pick was Muller Martini. The reason? The machines! Had I been working for another company, I would have become familiar with either coffee makers, operating elements or sheet metal constructions, whereas here I get to see the whole spectrum. Muller Martini machines have gears, belts, chains, pneumatics – all of the components a design engineer could wish for. That can only be a benefit for me, in the future, too – not to mention that Muller Martini will certainly be good for my résumé.

In the learning park, I was part of a three-person team of design engineer apprentices who worked together to produce a drilling machine and a milling machine. These projects went hand-in-hand, requiring us to work with automation engineers and multi-skilled mechanics. As design engineers, we prepared the drawings, while the multi-skilled mechanics built the machines and the automation engineers got them running with the controls. Above all, working with the multi-skilled mechanics gives us design engineers a sense of what is and isn't possible. We have to understand each other in order to achieve good results. So, it is always an advantage that we are in the same class at the vocational school.

I deliberately decided against doing the vocational certification during the apprenticeship, so I could concentrate on the challenges of working as a design engineer. I haven't decided yet what to do next after completing the apprenticeship. Becoming an engineer is one possible goal, but that's a hard and long journey. A combination of design engineering and workshop tasks is an appealing option – not least because I enjoyed the eight-week internship with the multi-skilled mechanics so much.

Pondering and researching

When I'm out and about, I constantly discover things and think about how they came to be. I think about the applied manufacturing processes, such as welding, casting, milling or turning. It's an ongoing process of analyzing every tiny thing – an occupational hazard of

being a design engineer. Often, I start to ponder and wonder what the point of this or that is. Sometimes I can answer the questions myself; sometimes I search the Internet. As an aside, if you search for our profession on Wikipedia, you find “inventor” in parentheses. For me, invention means developing a new and novel idea from scratch – it is the supreme discipline. To invent something one day would, of course, be a dream come true.

I can definitely imagine staying at Muller Martini. Of course, the current economic situation is a big challenge, and it’s not clear how that will develop. But there are still so many magazines and books being printed and consumed. Personally, I have no desire to read books and magazines electronically. The market is there and offers a lot of freedom – the graphic arts industry is thriving.

Have I aroused your interest in one of the many vocational training courses offered by Muller Martini? Then visit the training page on the Muller Martini website or download this brochure.

Your
Leo Schulthess, design engineer apprentice at Muller Martini in Zofingen