

The Numerical Algorithms Group (NAG) Career Stories

Ian Reid undertook a doctorate in computer mathematics at Lancaster University. After the first year of his degree he combined his doctorate with working for Royal Military College of Science and NAG under a scheme where he was able to complete his doctorate and undertake formal management training whilst in a technical role. When Ian moved out of an academic environment into the business world he initially gravitated towards a technical role, working his way up to be a technical group leader. However, he soon learnt that he really liked doing deals and setting direction which drove him towards more commercial roles.

Susan Shayler (Chief Operating Officer, NAG) notes that the company frequently employs people like Ian with a research background or a doctorate. Roles at NAG tend to call for a mix of technical and business skills and Susan feels that it is often easier to train someone with a doctorate into a business role, than someone with a business qualification into a technical role. Doctoral researchers offer the organisation maximum flexibility from its employees. This gives added value as you have people who can work in technical and commercial roles. For example Ian showed an interest and ability in the development of projects and doing deals, so it seemed natural to develop this and combine it with his technical background.

Ian Reid is now the company's Chief Commercial Officer and part of the senior management team. He has responsibility for all aspects of commercial strategy, but during his career has been through a range of roles both technical and commercial. Susan argues that PhDs bring a depth of skills (e.g. data analysis and project management) as well as high levels of motivation to the organisation. She is confident that NAG will continue to employ PhDs for this unique mix of technical and transferable skills.