

6 Daniel VILLALON brick-layer, uses traditional renewable resources (hemp, lime, clay, terracotta) – Craftsman specialized in traditional stone masonry with renewable insulation local materials.

Career path

“When I was 9, I already wanted to be a brick-layer”, so when I turned 15, I started pre-apprenticeship. I passed the professional degree at 18 then was employed for a few years. At 24, he had to insist to be allowed by his boss to take the project manager degree. Launched his own business soon after.

Motivations

“When I was 10-12, I used to go on sites and I did like the atmosphere there”

From the moment he had become a professional, he has been questioning techniques and the evolution of his job which made him eager to changing ways, try other techniques, remain open to new ones.

His own way

This line of trade is in constant evolution in terms of techniques and resources, in order to save energy.

Interests diverge in construction, whether it is industrial or artisanal.

A main issue comes from rules that are industry-oriented so they at times impose poor or bad solutions because they tend to globalize and ignore particular cases. Daniel VILLALON's priority is to respect his customer's interest rather than follow regulations strictly.

We have been using local natural materials for ages, yet the new rules happen to make it hard for us to include them in a construction : the rules are either too restrictive or too loose. For example, earth coatings pose an insurance and guarantee problem simply because the rule ignores those options.

Industrial masonry has its unified techniques document (DTU), or 'bible', but there is no such document as yet when it comes to eco-construction. Thus, when cork has been used for insulating walls or partitions, issues may arise that are not covered by insurances.

A surprising aspect

“Everything can be surprising since you must be aware all the time” M Villalon recently included the use of 'quenouilles' – cattail-like insulation modules. The must : keep an open mind.

Partners

He does not really often have time : sites can be an hour's drive away. He insists on getting trained all the time. He has been a member of the TIEZ-BREIZH association, which deals with traditional houses and landscapes of Brittany in Rennes since 1975, and they aim at informing professionals as well as individuals on traditional Breton masonry.

He usually has a stand at the November organic exhibition in Pontorson.

Miscellaneous

The management of the territory as of today is a mess, says he. Within a few years, wild urbanization has terminated a historical patrimony and replaced it with industrial concrete.

What to say to a candidate ?

- > skills are required, and it must be a choice, a personal call.
- > it is a state of mind : you must be ready for strenuous, long physically intense chores in all kinds of weather
- > Teaching young ones requires a lot of patience and wisdom; one needs to make them love the job and never disappoint their expectations.
- > There is no such thing as a stupid or a noble job; what matters is the nobility of the craft, of the job well done.

Hints for the descriptive flash-card for the job ?

- > don't forget before-after photos
- > be innovating, make people want to become that professionals

DEFINING THE JOB

- > stress the constant evolution, the open-mindedness; insist on the notion that tradition is not stuck in the past, it adjusts for the future yet bet on tradition in a progress oriented environment, in order to build in a sustainable, gratifying and efficient way.
- > building has a millennium-long tradition, so it includes wisdom
- > however, it must also remain a happy job

Values – key-words

- Reflexion, passion > what we do is for people, so we do the best
- Pleasure > we must enjoy doing what we do, on all accounts
- Local > this activity must concentrate on the area, especially in terms of resources

Recruiting

Life-long-learning on the spot, within the enterprise is still an option
Start as an apprentice, but not only : always be curious, eager to learn new techniques, new materials. Learn from all instances when an example is set.