

KEIRA-NARICE LIDDINGTON

Former student:

- NVQ L3 in Aeronautical Engineering: Aircraft Interior Fitting/Removal
- NVQ L3 in Welding and Fabrication

Current:

L3 Engineering Apprentice Course Director



WHY DID YOU DO AN APPRENTICESHIP?

I decided that 6th form wasn't for me after receiving the summer work. I wanted to be hands on and busy, not sat in a classroom all the time... it was even better that I could be paid to be learning on the job and when in the classroom too. I was local to Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group so when an opportunity came, I went for it.

WHAT LEVEL APPRENTICESHIP ARE YOU STUDYING?

I studied two apprenticeships at L3:

- NVQ L3 in Aeronautical Engineering: Aircraft Interior Fitting/Removal
- NVQ L3 in Welding and Fabrication

HOW HAS STUDYING AN APPRENTICESHIP PREPARED YOU FOR THE WORLD OF WORK?

Working with others has been critical, it has helped me learn the social aspects but also the confidence to talk, ask questions and challenge where applicable. Learning processes, procedures, time keeping, and time management have been valuable inside and outside.

DID YOU ENJOY YOUR APPRENTICESHIP?

I enjoyed many aspects of my apprenticeship; it was tough don't get me wrong but well worth it, I never had any issues with being a 'woman in engineering' and was always respected and looked after by those I worked with. The people I met and skills I learnt have been invaluable and helped make me who I am today, it's certainly helped me with progressing into the teaching of apprenticeships.

HOW WAS THE PROCESS OF APPLYING/ STARTING AN APPRENTICESHIP?

The process was fairly simple although I know it varies amongst employers. I submitted my CV to the email address provided and waited until the closing date. I then had to attend an aptitude test day which involved, English, maths, problem solving, hand skills, following written instructions and image instructions etc, it was a long day but looking back very enjoyable. After that I had to sit an interview with various levels of management with a surprise practical test relevant to the area, I'd be in.

Starting I won't lie was terrifying as I was 16 and in a company that was rather large in size, the best thing of being part of a cohort though was we were all in the same boat!

College of
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COLLEGE OF WEST ANGLIA

L3 Engineering
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Director

WHY ARE APPRENTICESHIPS SO IMPORTANT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

It provides the gateway into industry for so many young people, they earn whilst they learn in a professional environment; something that is always difficult to achieve on a full-time college course. They don't just learn the trades but they learn the soft skills required to succeed, including critical thinking, social skills, working with a variety of age groups and people. I did two and I will always highlight the benefits and how it's gotten me to where I am today.

HOW DO APPRENTICESHIPS BENEFIT EMPLOYERS?

It allows employers to shape the future of their workforce, they are key stakeholders in Apprenticeships and have a lot more say in the training and overall experience now. They train the Apprentices to a nationally agreed standard, but it enables them to tailor learning to suit their company requirements.

WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH WORKING WITH APPRENTICES?

I completed two after leaving school, I then left after 6 years to go into FE and teach Engineering, Weld and Fab. I'm now the course director for all L3 Engineering apprentices at Kings Lynn Campus, College of West Anglia. Running at least 4 standards consecutively, with over 100 Apprentices across these and Norfolk/Cambridgeshire, it's come full circle I suppose!

It has been an eye opener seeing it from the flip-side, for sure. It's been great working with them and seeing them progress through the years, having had my first cohort start to finish on their apprenticeship now, it really is something, to see them finish their EPAs and become qualified.

FROM AN EMPLOYERS POV, HOW EASY IS THE PROCESS OF HIRING AND TRAINING AND APPRENTICE?

I'd say from employer feedback, finding the Apprentices is probably one of the hardest aspects of the process. From their location, to transport, to them making the decision on if the job is the right fit for the individual, as well as the employers. The training of Apprentices varies on the standard with key criteria to meet, so this can be something that's easy and sometimes difficult for employers as their workloads vary and the work they complete changes daily.



HOW DOES THE APPRENTICESHIP ROUTE DIFFER FROM THE MORE TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITY ROUTE?

You earn whilst you learn (rather than gaining a bundle of debt!) all whilst gaining qualifications. Most Apprenticeships are L2/L3 for those that have just left school but more and more, are now being released that are L4 and above. Many of these are now equivalent to degrees and are funded through the Apprenticeship schemes, so all the qualifications, you earn whilst you learn and you don't necessarily have to move either.



WHO ARE APPRENTICESHIPS FOR?

Everyone. There is no age limit now, I have a 57-year-old apprentice currently who's retraining, so it's definitely not just for 16-year-olds! If you've got the drive, like to be learning/doing and know what you want to do, then an apprenticeship is probably a good route.

WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS TO STUDENTS UNDERTAKING AN APPRENTICESHIP?

The hands on experience is key, you meet amazing people with amazing skills and knowledge, that you then get to learn and use in your every day. Practical skills and soft skills are so key, and people forget that. It provides job security, you are employed for the duration of the apprenticeship and both you, the employer and the third party, are under contract to get you through it. The best thing for some is that you do get paid, you get paid holiday and sickness, you can also set up a pension and get started early in life to look after you when your career is done.

