



## TAKE YOUR APPRENTICESHIP

### LUKE'S PERSPECTIVE - DIRECT LINE APPRENTICESHIP

Luke works as a Business Analyst helping deliver change in relation to processes and technology with the Direct Line Group. Before becoming a Business Analyst, Luke completed a Level 3 Certificate in Providing Financial Services & a Level 3 Diploma in providing Customer Service, both of which were completed under the same apprenticeship. Luke then completed a higher apprenticeship as a Business Analyst, a Level 4 Business Analyst Diploma.

#### What route did you take into apprenticeships?

I went to Holbrook Academy in Suffolk and I've completed two apprenticeships, both with the same organization. I started my first one in November 2016 which was providing financial services and customer services, and my second one around September 2019 (as a Business Analyst level four apprenticeship). I'm currently working as a Business Analyst.

#### How did you first hear about apprenticeships and what drew you to them?

I went to college for a month or so and I felt it didn't fit with me. I looked on the [gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk) and Direct Line was actually the first placement I applied for, and it was substantially more pay than most apprenticeships.

I've never been a huge fan of traditional classroom learning, I like getting hands on and doing things. One of the benefits of doing an apprenticeship is that you get to take all the things you're learning in theory and put them into practice.

One of the biggest downsides for apprenticeships is that the application process can be very competitive. Although this is the case, I would still encourage people to apply for any opportunity that interests them as you miss every opportunity you don't take.

#### Apprenticeship can be competitive; how did you find the whole process of searching for an apprenticeship, were there many options?

There were quite a few other apprenticeships but there weren't many within financial services. There were some for estate agents for example and other

areas that didn't really interest me, but insurance seemed like a good idea.

There were a few rounds of interviews, Some of the questions were tough and it was my first interview so it was quite nerve-racking. I really wanted to do well and it felt like a lot of pressure but it all paid off.

#### What is your top tip in terms of the searching, applying and the interview process?

If you set-up an account on gov.uk all your details are saved. This is very useful, especially if you're applying for multiple apprenticeships. For apprenticeships not advertised on the government website, you may need to submit your CV and a covering letter.

I think first of all in terms of applying, just apply and never be put off! When I first saw the apprenticeship advertised, the pay was above average and I thought it must be aimed at older people and I'd just turned 17! So I'd say you lose nothing by applying, just believe in yourself and be confident. You have to drive yourself to do things to get to the place you want to be. A lot of it is down to confidence, it can be competitive so you have to drive the process yourself and be determined, if you want to be successful in finding the right one for you.

#### Could you tell us about the roles you've had as an apprentice and the kind of responsibilities that were given to you?

One of the common myths surrounding apprenticeships is you'll just be making tea and coffee and you won't have any real responsibilities but I've found that to be untrue

I went through exactly the same standard training as anyone else would go through. After a number of months of training I went on to dealing with real

customers and their policies. Then because I was so persistent, I was still an Apprentice but I was covering for team leaders when they were ill, which helped improve my profile within the company. My most recent role has been a big jump and I'm now working as a Business Analyst within the Technology side of the company.

### **How were your days structured? What did your working week look like?**

For my level three we were assigned 10-20% of our time per week plus time for any other necessary work. We would have a three or four-hour slot each week on the level 4 which I found more than adequate to complete my studying, background reading and any other work with my tutor.

The main difference between the level three and four was that with my level four I had specific week-long courses., I would go into London for a classroom style course followed and exam and this went towards my end diploma.

### **Did you find you had plenty of study support from both the employer and your training provider?**

I always found that the time we were given was more than adequate to do the work. I didn't have to do loads of stuff in my own time. During my level three I had specific time booked out to allow me to complete my studying.

For level four because my role is more flexible, I was given the freedom to fit my timing into my working week alongside other commitments.

### **Regarding progression - could you tell us about your progression and how it happened?**

Level four apprenticeships are quite hard to come by, they're very competitive. I've always been very clear from the start of my career that I'm serious about wanting to progress within DLG. I've always put my time in and made it clear that I wanted to work my way up.

A couple of times a year, the Execs would visit to check how everything was working and take on board any feedback. I was invited along to a lunch with a number of my colleagues as well as the Exec team. I got talking with the Chief Operating Officer and explained to him that I had an interest in

technology. I did a trial 'Day in the Life' type day before they committed to offering me the apprenticeship.

I was very lucky being able to network, I think it goes back to that confidence thing and being honest about what you want to get. Just taking a little bit of risk, being persistent and really work hard, it all pays off!

### **What were some of the biggest challenges of studying through an apprenticeship?**

There was plenty of time for studying so I didn't really have an issue with juggling studying and work. I did have to put off some studying for a few months because of a work project, but I worked it out with my employer and got that time back. There's not been any real major problems. Some of the exams, especially the level four were challenging, but overall it's been a great experience and I've got a job at the end and I'm more than happy with how everything's going at the moment.

### **What's been the best part of doing an apprenticeship or what's been the thing that you've got most out of it?**

It's been a good experience and a great way to get into the technical side of the business, and for me to branch across and prove myself. Hopefully I've got many more moves to better job position ahead of me in my career. At the end of the day I've ended up in a role I'm very happy with whilst earning a great salary at the same time.

### **What would be your top tip you would say to anyone who is just starting to consider an apprenticeship?**

If I was talking to my younger self, the very first thing I'd say is just get things done! It sounds very simple, but being organised makes life so much easier! Especially in my day-to-day work because there's so many things I have to manage.

Someone told me years ago that your network is your net worth - so the more people you talk to the better. Surround yourself with people who are aiming towards the stars and being successful, and you'll probably end up in the same position as them.

Just believe in yourself, be confident, and be honest.