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Aaron Oreschnick **Deputy Restaurant Manager** **and Trainer, Pizza Hut**

When the opportunity came up to do a degree apprenticeship, I knew I couldn't turn it down. I wanted to do a degree and go back to university, but there was no opportunity for me to do it in any other way. It was perfect and a way for me to work and study at the same time and not have any debt at the end of it.

Ultimately, it's down to you to be organised, set yourself goals and to keep to them. That has been a huge learning experience for me, but at the same time it has meant that I've become more organised and set myself deadlines, so I can get all my work done in time and do well. And by doing that I've found it's not a struggle. The work-life balance has been really easy and it's all working together.

I'm absolutely loving being a student. The tutors are fantastic and because they are people who have worked in the industry as well, there is so much that you can learn from them. With the apprenticeship you are mixed in with people from different backgrounds and from different companies, and you learn so much from them as well.

It's just fantastic - it's not just learning for learning's sake, it's learning to develop you and your job role, to benefit you and your company.

At Pizza Hut, I'm just seen as me, I'm Aaron, I'm a deputy manager. Being an apprentice doesn't change that. The word apprentice within our company is looked at in a good way and a positive light. It's a way for us to help people develop and grow, get a qualification while working.

I have definitely made the right decision. Four years of your life may sound daunting, but I'm loving every single moment and I'm already seeing a change in myself and in my work. Everything is just so positive.

Aimee Holden **CMI, Stateside Foods**

Aimee Holden had already been accepted onto a full-time undergraduate programme at another university but instead decided to apply for a degree apprenticeship opportunity at Stateside Foods, in partnership with Manchester Met.

She is now in her first year of the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship, a four-year programme, during which she will attend university for 24 days a year, studying towards a BA (Hons) Business Management Professional.

Alongside her degree, she will also earn the CMI Level 5 Diploma in Management and Leadership – and ultimately be eligible to apply for Chartered Manager status.

“I wanted to go to university, but also thought that starting work would help me to grow and develop as a professional. When I discovered that I could combine both, especially with a foreword thinking employer like Stateside Foods, I knew it was the right option for me.”

I'm able to study a full honours degree, so will ultimately have the same qualification as students on a traditional course, while having all the benefits of being employed, such as a full-time salary. The fact that I can apply what I learn straight away when I return to work after our study days makes such a difference.

The programme is really practical and relevant to work, where we are able to rotate around different departments. It is just what the company needs, and we are really respected by our colleagues for the ideas we are able to contribute“

Lucy Cheng **Chartered Manager Degree** **Apprenticeship, United Utilities**

The CMDA programme has already supported my career with exposure to the business and support in personal development through Sponsors and Mentors. I hope that the CMDA programme will provide me with the skills to lead and manage in the future at United Utilities.

United Utilities support, encourage and develop employees and I am an example of this investment in their own people. It's a great place to work.

The CMDA provides a wide range of teaching styles and classes are very interactive, which has allowed me to develop in areas that I may never have had the opportunity to do in the work place, such as debates, group tasks and presentations.

Compared to my previous studies, this teaching style is more personal and relatable to my place of work. Using new technology in the teaching environment with tablets and interactive boards has been refreshing and engaging.

Lukas Hughes **Chartered Manager Degree** **Apprentice, Stateside Foods Ltd**

I really wanted to get work experience, while continuing onto higher education, and I found the management apprenticeship with a sponsored degree in Business Management. I would have chosen to study this at university, so deciding to go down this route was a no brainer! I am gaining four whole years of work experience in a growing business, whilst studying for a degree without the tuition fees. As well as that, I'm be working towards additional qualifications.

Working at Stateside Foods is brilliant, there are so many opportunities and I have already had lots of different experiences.

As I am one of the first year apprentices, I am based on monthly rotation around the business. I am seeing how the business runs as a whole before I decide to go into any particular department.

This is brilliant because I am still not 100% sure which area I want to go into. As well as that, once I go into another department I can clearly see how all of the departments rely on each other and work together. There's also a lot of support given which is really good. And there's free pizza, what a perk that is!

I get time to work on my assignments and my project at work, which really helps. As long as you manage your time well and ensure that you know when the deadlines are for assignments and give yourself enough time to do it, it is fine.

It is completely different to college, it really is. There are a lot more real life case studies, used as examples for the theory. This is very useful, because I find it easier to understand it in that way.

As well as that, there are a lot of discussions in the class that allow people to debate and talk about the theory that we are learning. I think that the interaction between the lecturers and the other students is really positive and creates an effective learning environment.

Robert Pixton **Network Performance Engineer,** **United Utilities**

A lot of my work experience has just been on the job, whereas this is a formal qualification, which recognises my skills, rather than just more general experience.

I'm already seeing after just a short amount of time on the programme, that I'm learning a lot about how to manage myself and how to manage my time more effectively, which I've already applied at work. It's already helping me, so after a few more years I'll be fully reaping the rewards for my effort.

I'd already studied at university and am paying back a student loan, so the fact that I didn't have to pay any tuition fees was really important.

But, I've also loved getting back in a classroom environment and learning new things. It's also really useful to be able to apply the university learning back at work, as it helps you to remember things. In fact, I've been pleasantly surprised by how much I am enjoying being a student again. The facilities are fantastic and it is better than the last time I went to university.

There is an outdated stigma around the word apprenticeship, but I think schemes like this are really helping to change attitudes, especially when people see what I'm learning and how I can apply it. It's definitely one of the best career decisions I've made.

Marianne Payne **BMW**

The idea of having a job really appealed to me, but I didn't want to give up on getting qualifications completely, so I decided to look for an apprenticeship.

Working alongside doing the academic work, has meant I've learnt a lot of skills I didn't expect to learn. Important things such as giving feedback, when to speak up and how to communicate with different people, and general workplace etiquette that you might not have learnt at school. I've also developed a lot of great working relationships, building my professional network, knowing who I work well with and can ask for support from.

It is hard, but worth it, you get out what you put in and there are loads of opportunities available to you. People like apprentices and if you take an interest in what they are doing, they'll always try to get you involved in things like business trips and exhibitions.

I have always been quite independent and really love the fact that I am able to earn my own money and all the other benefits that come with working at a company like BMW, such as the car scheme. Originally, I was a bit nervous about the university side of things as I wasn't sure how much of it I'd be able to do, as I'd found lab work difficult at school. But I've really enjoyed learning new techniques and have found the practical skills I already have from work, where I'd been working in the lab for a couple of years, really help.

The lecturers and tutors on the programme are great and always willing to help, both at university and when you are doing self-study. They always answer emails quickly and they are more than happy to read work you are doing and give advice.

Ellie Warburton **Digital & Technology Solutions** **Degree Apprentice, AstraZeneca**

I did an apprenticeship as I wanted to increase my skill set, in a way that would allow me to learn while working and earning a full-time wage. The degree apprenticeship with Manchester Met allows me to understand the context of what I'm learning and also the chance to apply it. And I won't have any debt.

I attend Manchester Met every Monday during term times, and work Tuesday to Friday. It works out that I attend university for 30 days a year. It works well because the course allows us to tailor our assignments around the projects we are doing at work. We have two assignments per module and there are three modules per year.

At work, I have many responsibilities within my team and love that we are given the opportunity to contribute to really valuable pieces of work and projects. I enjoy being able to learn knowledge and skills, for example gaining experience of the technical aspects and learning to code. It's great that I am able to put my learning in to practice almost immediately.

At work I am a very valued member of the team and massively supported by my peers.

I would definitely recommend doing an apprenticeship. I think choosing to go to university as a full-time student is a big decision to make, especially if you are not 100% sure on what it is you want to do and because it costs so much. I think degree apprenticeships are a great way to develop yourself and build on your skills and confidence.

I don't think you should be afraid to take risks and try new things, it is about building and managing your career and it's okay to say what you enjoy and what you don't.

James Jarrad **Shaping Cloud**

This apprenticeship has been the biggest career defining move I think I'll ever make. My experience in software development has developed exponentially, I've gone from someone who can create a basic program to someone that can understand multiple platforms and multiple languages.

I wasn't a programmer before last September, however with university and work's help I have learnt to develop websites, create testing scripts and programs, start my own personal projects, understand needs of different types of businesses, developed my confidence, professionalism and so much more.

Nicola McNicholls **Health and Social Care**

I decided to join the programme, as I wanted to learn more and gain formal qualifications to support the skills and knowledge I already have. By undertaking a degree apprenticeship it has meant I can continue in my current role full time and without my pay being impacted. This meant I did not have to take out a student loan to afford to attend university.

The content of the programme really appealed to me, as it is relevant to my current role. I also liked that the students I would be studying alongside would be from multi-disciplinary teams and the knowledge I would gain from this inter-professional working.

Returning to study was scary and at first, I was very nervous and full of doubt, but the amount of support available has been fantastic. There is so much help from the university from face to face sessions on Harvard referencing to PowerPoint presentations on critical writing skills and searching the library. I have found everyone to be extremely helpful and approachable.

I've not found balancing work and university to be a problem, as I have been quite organised and have a very supportive manager. We are also given the study dates so far in advance that I have been able to organise my work diary appropriately.

Completing the degree apprenticeship will strengthen my knowledge and my ability to lead, manage and develop my current team. It will give me the skills and confidence to make changes that will have a positive impact within the organisation and provide me with the qualifications to progress further within The Northern Care Alliance.

If anyone is currently considering applying for the degree apprenticeship, I'd say do it! I really recommend it, as it will be invaluable to your career and improve your knowledge and abilities.