

SURE Solutions Apprenticeships



We talk to Craig Shaw, Operations Director at Sure Solutions and Olivia Sherlock, Business Operations Apprentice, about what apprenticeships bring to their business and the apprenticeship experience.

The Employer Perspective:

Craig Shaw, Operations Director

Q. How has your organisation benefitted from recruiting apprentices?

Craig: Our rapid expansion has given us the opportunity to invest heavily in the skills and training of our team and the future of the business in our apprenticeship program. Over 85% of our workforce started their careers as apprentices, myself included. So, we know they are a big part of how the business will sustain itself in the future. Currently, we have 8 apprentices in our organisation. Our apprentices bring fresh ideas to the table. Through their training, they are bringing new skills to the team. For example, in digital marketing. They contribute heavily to building a dynamic culture in the workplace. If there's a new area to look at, then apprentices are ideally placed to take on those new tasks and adapt quickly. For example, we recently worked with LJMU to assess our environmental impact as a business. This ongoing analysis is now headed up by one of our apprentices.



Craig Shaw

Q. What advice would you give to potential apprentices wanting to join your business?

Craig: Be prepared: "if you fail to prepare, prepare to fail." If a piece of information is available on google, I'd expect a successful applicant to have done their research to show how keen they are for a particular opportunity. This is one way of seeing who stands out in the recruitment phase. Be yourself: often when recruiting, we look to understand each person as an individual, with individual aims and development path. If an applicant is only saying what they think the answer should be, and not what they really think, then it's harder to determine if that person would be a good fit for the organisation. Be understood: good candidates often know why they want an apprenticeship and can clearly articulate why they want to work at the organisation. Be honest: if you don't know, say you don't know. No one expects you to have all the answers, especially an apprentice. Be adaptable: show willingness to adapt to different challenges with a positive attitude. At an SME ways of working can change quickly and all members of the team need to keep learning and development into new areas.

Q. What advice would you give to other businesses who are thinking about recruiting apprentices?

Craig: Partner with the right training provider or college. This is important. Courses can be in person or remote, which could have a big impact in availability. Research the course up front and select which course you want your apprentice to do before advertising. Plan a typical 12 month cycle e.g. recruitment planning (March-April), advertising a role (May-June), selection (July-August), on-boarding (September). Take a long-term view of success. Apprentices can often deliver value in the short term, but ultimately it should be the long term value that any program is judged upon. Talk to other businesses, talk to former apprentices: there's various ways of running a program, pull in ideas from others who can input.



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The Apprentice Perspective:

Olivia Sherlock, Business Operations Apprentice



Q. How did you find out about your apprenticeship?

“ I first heard about apprenticeships when I was in year 11 preparing to do my GCSE's. When I left school, I made the decision to go into full time employment in the hospitality industry. At the age of 16 I was unsure of what career path I wanted to undertake. With a keen interest in sales and marketing I began to search for opportunities in the surrounding area. However, it quickly became apparent that there is a certain level of qualification needed before embarking on a career in that sector. When I came across the advert for SURE Solutions it covered a wide range of topics across the 3-year course, all of which appealed to me. After the initial interview, and finding out more information about what the apprenticeship offered to me, it was a no-brainer! I knew that this was going to be the course that would kick start my career, giving me the advantages of gaining on the job experience whilst also completing my college studies. ”



Olivia Sherlock

Q. What's being an Apprentice like?

“ At first, I think I definitely had a pre-conception of what being an apprentice would be like. However, after just a couple of months of being in the role, those pre-conceptions disappeared quickly as I began my day to day tasks. Every task I was given definitely felt like it was serving the business in a positive way and was going to have a small impact in the way that we operate. The opportunities as an apprentice are also fantastic. Pre-Covid, I was visiting development seminars hosted by NatWest and the University of Liverpool. Throughout lockdown I have continued to take part in webinars to broaden my knowledge and development. From my own personal experience there hasn't been a single aspect that I haven't enjoyed. The college work has been challenging, yet enjoyable. To have now qualified in my Level 2 studies feels like I have taken the next step in my career. The flexibility of an apprenticeship has also really helped both myself and my employer tailor the specific modules to my own learning and the needs of the business. ”

Q. What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about becoming an apprentice?

“ I would definitely recommend an apprenticeship to anyone that is considering going into further education, whether they are a school leaver or a mature learner. Having the opportunity to study, whilst also gaining hands on experience and understanding the day to day undertaking of tasks, has definitely exceeded my development and understanding of business. As someone that didn't have an appeal to go to college, I think an apprenticeship is a fantastic way to get qualified in a chosen career path. It is also important to remember that you don't have to go to college and achieve A-Levels to go to university. Many Level 4 apprenticeships are equal to a foundation level degree. University could then be the next step in your career. ”



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