

Merseytravel Apprentice

Joanna Wiczak – Business & Administration Apprentice with Merseytravel



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Continuing with our series on apprentices and apprenticeships, I spoke to Joanna Wiczak – Business & Administration Apprentice and Union Learning Representative at Merseytravel about her apprenticeship at Merseytravel and her future plans: (first featured in our TUC Congress item in October's eBriefing –

http://www.cfa.uk.com/ebriefing/oct09/ebrief_oct09.html#tuc_conference)

Joanna, 22, from Poznan, Poland has been in the UK for three years, having finished school after the equivalent of her 'A' levels. Now one year into a two year Business & Administration apprenticeship, Joanna is based at the Merseytravel headquarters in the heart of Liverpool.



HG: "Getting started Joanna, what made you think of taking up an apprenticeship?"

JW: Well, I had started working in the catering industry when I first came over here, but didn't really see my future there and my heart wasn't in it to be honest – working with food and in the kitchens was not really 'me'. It was when I was thinking of going back home that I saw this particular Merseytravel apprenticeship advertised through Connexions and decided to apply for it.

HG: How did the application process work?

JW: I had to complete a standard form asking for the usual qualifications and previous work experience. Then out of a total of 90 applicants, 16 were selected to go forward for interview, with just 5 of us being recruited.

HG: What did the interview entail?

JW: It was a formal discussion with a panel that asked about my previous employment, what skills I could bring to Merseytravel and what I felt I would get out of it personally. I was overjoyed to have been selected!

HG: What work do you do in your role at Merseytravel?

JW: At the moment, I am busy with the filing of papers and documents effectively so they can be easily accessed at a later date. I also need to archive materials so they remain securely held until they need to be seen again or destroyed, input data into various different systems which requires accuracy to ensure that the data is in the correct place and is correctly inputted. I often go to meetings where I'm expected to take minutes and circulate the minutes as the written record of the discussions that have taken place.

HG: How varied do you find your role?

JW: Over the two-year period of my apprenticeship, every four months my placement changes to provide me with a wide variety of different sections within the organisation to gain experience from. So far I have worked with HR, in Projects, with the Legal team, and now I'm with the Data and Compliance Department. This means that I have a further two placements to complete before completing my apprenticeship and have really had first-hand experience of what goes on across the business.

HG: Tell me about your training.

JW: I successfully completed an NVQ level 2 in Business & Administration and am now moving on to the next level. Training at Merseytravel has been thorough and has included workshops on Dignity at work, Diversity at work, Assertiveness, Confidence, Time Management, Health and Safety, Minute Taking, Report-writing, Skills for Life and ECDL. What's more, I'm in the process of working on an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) qualification, which Merseytravel has funded. This is accepted by the Academy of English, to help me as a non-English student to be admitted into University in the UK. And who knows, this may even lead to a degree in Business & Administration one day!

HG: What are the main challenges you have faced?

JW: During my apprenticeship there have been some really challenging times and in particular, I remember the apprenticeship interview itself as the first one. It was my first formal interview, in English and after it I needed to wait up to three days for the outcome which was a very stressful period! I needn't have worried though, as thanks to what I have experienced over the last couple of years, I am much more confident in my own abilities. I am very proud that I was asked to give my first presentation at a recent Skills Pledge Conference which is something I couldn't have done before.

HG: How would you sum up your apprenticeship?

JW: I have enjoyed all of my apprenticeship and learnt a great deal from it, especially through the courses and training where I have been able to enjoy learning new things to develop myself. It's all about getting qualifications and experience that will help you in your future life.

HG: What would you describe as your dream job?

JW: Since being a little girl, I have always wanted to be a Police Officer and Merseytravel does even have its own Police Force, so that would be one option for me. Combined with further work in the Legal department, I think this would prove the ideal combination for my future career.

HG: What do you think about the future of apprenticeships?

JW: My recent question to Gordon Brown at the September 2009 TUC Congress was around the fact that apprentices are currently paid around £95 per week for a full-time week. In my opinion they ought to be receiving at least the minimum wage and also receiving ongoing training during their apprenticeships. For this reason, I decided to become more involved in working towards this by becoming a TUC Union Learning Rep five months ago. I want to use my own experience to ensure that all those adult learners within Merseytravel have access to the relevant courses and are taking up the relevant opportunities for training when they become available in the future."

To find out more about Apprenticeships please visit:
<http://www.cfa.uk.com/qualifications/apprenticeships.html>



Helen Gerlach.

Please contact Helen directly with your apprenticeship successes for publishing in a future eBriefing.