

**Name of the Business: John Laing Training**  
**Offering Apprenticeships in: Business Administration, Finance and Sales**

**The nature of the Business**

JLT is an independent training provider. They work with start-up businesses, SMEs, blue chip companies and public sector organisations to deliver bespoke training. This training includes the delivery of Apprenticeships and vocational and technical qualifications. The ethos of the company is to engage with the local community and promote the key benefits of Apprenticeships. JLT has designed an Alternative Education offer for schools, delivered through mobile training units and taken to school premises, the programmes are predominantly delivered in Construction and Hair and Beauty. Learners are given the opportunity to achieve a BTEC qualification whilst gaining experience in a variety of elements of their chosen vocation. The flexibility and variety of skills and experience gained through these programmes provide learners with a really strong platform from which to make their next steps, ensuring positive destinations. JLT also support Adult Education projects, providing skills and qualifications to support unemployed individuals back into employment. The organisation is Matrix accredited, providing comprehensive and up-to-date information, advice and guidance on career paths for their clients.

**‘JLT feature in the top 3 small provider Apprenticeship awards in England.’**

Their growth is led by the industry; they take a customised, project-based approach with employers, designing and creating enhanced Apprenticeship frameworks e.g. a bids and proposals framework to support NG Bailey, a UK leading independent engineering, IT and facilities services business operating in the UK and Europe. They encourage the employers to offer professional qualifications in addition to the Apprenticeship framework. At the heart of everything JLT do is to ensure every single learner and employer gain maximum possible benefit from their programme.

**Where is JLT located?**

JLT’s office is located in Rosanne House, Parkway, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6HG. Their delivery area spans Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and the borders of Cambridgeshire and Essex plus North West and East London.

**Who runs the centre?**

The Managing Director of JLT is Lorraine Tomlinson. She joined the company as a Deputy MD in March 2005 and by the autumn of that year was the MD, taking them through the management buy-out from the parent company.



Lorraine Tomlinson and Anthony Clarke check out the latest business development plans

The company employ 41 full-time equivalent members of staff including assessors, trainers and associates. The latter ensure that JLT can bring in the expertise from across the sectors, for example, to run professional workshops.

JLT are currently supporting between 150-160 Apprentices, working predominantly with SMEs. JLT has encountered real success in engaging SMEs who are traditionally put off the Apprenticeship programme due to a perceived belief that it's too complicated. From an initial business needs analysis, through to strong information, advice & guidance, recruitment support and flexible, quality, personalised training delivery, JLT remove the barriers for SMEs and have supported hundreds of local small businesses in making a real success of Apprenticeships. They advertise and recruit Apprentices on the Apprenticeship Vacancies website set up by the National Apprenticeship Service.

One of the elements of their training programme that they are understandably proud of is the development of an Apprentice Assessment Day – now seen as a model of best practice across other Apprenticeship providers. The Assessment Day incorporates practical activities to determine the strengths of the candidates plus interview experience and tips for making successful applications. The days also give JLT staff a real insight as to the career ambitions and needs of potential Apprentices which allow them to match the right Apprentices with the right businesses. The day was developed to tackle poorly completed applications from potential Apprentices and to avoid employers undergoing the laborious task of sifting through significant numbers of applications in order to find suitable applicants.

#### **Why Lorraine believes in Apprenticeships?**

In the past three years JLT have taken on 7 Apprentices, 5 are still with the company. All have completed Level 2, four have moved onto Level 3 and one has completed Level 3. Those on a finance Apprenticeship are being supported through their training and assessment by West Herts College.

The decision to recruit apprentices came at a time when the business had relocated to new offices in Welwyn Garden City and had ambitious plans for growth and diversification. Recruiting apprentices was a cost effective way to recruit young talent, build capacity whilst providing opportunities for local young people.

Lorraine explains that the benefits to the company of taking on Apprentices are significant.

***'They bring fresh ideas to the business, particularly with regard to communication methods e.g. digital technologies.'***

**'You need to invest time and patience in the Apprentices and put a structure around the training programme to support them.'**

The programme has been a great success for the business we have skilled individuals, trained in our processes who are great advocates for both JLT and Apprenticeships. They are great fun to have around the office and bring a whole new energy and dynamic to the team.

Our apprentices also support our marketing and business development teams at external events, schools, careers fairs etc talking positively to employers and other young people of their experiences.

JLT support a 'buddying' system so a longer serving Apprentice will be on hand to answer all the queries of a newly recruited one. JLT also employ Apprentice mentors who are on hand to support; especially during the initial difficult transition from School/College into a professional working environment.

The Apprentices have full-time contracts, are paid more than the minimum Apprenticeship salary, have continuity of employment and have exactly the same benefits as the other employees including an opportunity to be involved in development activities.

## **Adam's Story**

### **Background**

Adam left St Michael's School in Watford at 16. Amongst his GCSEs he gained a grade C in English and a grade D in Maths. In his words he was 'not classroom orientated' and was ready to go into the workplace. He feels that his Grade D Maths has not held him back as experience gained in the workplace together with the support through his apprenticeship programme has given him the skills and confidence to do his job well.

Adam was unsure of a career path when he left school and felt he had little direction. He spent three years focussing on customer service in the retail industry before moving into an office junior post with an electrical company. He remained in this post for 2 years before finding a job at The Grove Hotel in Watford where he gained his Level 2 Customer Service qualification assessed by HIT, the recognised training provider for hospitality and catering. Adam gained experience of reception work and customer relations but importantly found he had a natural ability to work with people from a range of backgrounds in a very demanding environment. At the age of 24 decided that he no longer wanted to work unsociable hours and applied for an estate agency Apprenticeship in Croxley, supported by JLT. Although this gave him the opportunity to develop strong, communication and organisational skills as well as knowledge of working with high profile professionals such as solicitors he was still working on a Saturday. When he applied for a recruitment agency post in Watford through JLT, he was approached to join the training provider. He has been impressed by the progression opportunities the post affords plus the varied experiences and, of course, the non-Saturday working pattern.

### **Current role**

Adam's current job involves supporting young people through the whole process of becoming an Apprentice; from initial telephone interview through to running the assessment days, understanding their needs, providing strong IAG and ultimately placing them into an Apprenticeship with a suitable employer. He looks after the Watford/Hemel Hempstead/St Albans areas of the county together with parts of North London. At the age of 26, his responsibility has increased and now includes employer meetings to promote the business benefits of the Apprenticeship scheme to open up new vacancies for young people to fill.

As an Apprentice Ambassador for the Beds and Herts Provider Network he delivers presentations and workshops to school pupils from Year 10 upwards. The presentations ensure young people are fully equipped with an awareness and knowledge of Apprenticeships when they come to make choices about their next steps in education. He believes that the messages promoting Apprenticeships need to be delivered in the first instance by the head teachers and governing body so they have credibility with staff, parents and students.



Adam in his supervising role, supporting Steph, the latest recruit

He says of his experience with JLT – ‘it has given me an opportunity to do different job roles. I have gained confidence and enjoy supporting young people in their career decisions as we support them onto the first step on the career ladder’. One of his favourite activities is delivering training where his input helps young people to gain confidence in presenting themselves within a business environment.

**‘In becoming an Apprentice remember that you are not paying for the training and qualifications, instead you are being paid.’**

Adam has obtained both a Level 2 in Business Administration and a Level 2 in Sales since joining JLT and is just starting a direct recruitment qualification. He wants to progress to Level 3 and then aim at towards Level 4.

Personal development is also important at JLT and as part of this programme Adam has undertaken a programme of activities including, recruitment and selection, communication, coaching and mentoring and is now developing his sales skills. He attends a number of external events including a two day Youth Employment Conference in London. This has helped him to gain knowledge on the government’s policy regarding Apprenticeships and has enabled him to build his networking skills and connections.

He explains that what JLT do best is develop people and he can see a clear progression pathway within the company, with short, medium and longer term goals and targets set that lead to qualifications and consequently promotion. Adam is determined to continue learning more about the business and has his sights set on potentially progressing into the commercial side of the business.

## **Steph’s story**

### **Background**

Steph has only been with JLT for 3 months and her permanent smile backs up her first words about the work and the employer - ‘I’m loving it’.

Steph left Presdales School in Hertford at the age of 16. With GCSE qualifications including grades B or C in Maths, English Language and English Literature, Steph went to Hertford Regional College for 2 years to study Level 3 Business Retail. She did this whilst working in a bar to earn some much needed money. On completing the course Steph moved into full-time employment in the office of a local plumbing and heating company. However, she was teaching herself and there were no opportunities to progress. Several months into this work and a chance meeting at an employers’ exhibition brought her into contact with JLT who were able to put her onto a Level 2 Business & Administration Apprenticeship meaning a structured training

programme alongside the opportunity to demonstrate her competency in a range of business skills. Steph received full support from her JLT trainer throughout the programme. JLT saw the potential in Steph and as an employer recruited her to a vacant position in their Welwyn Garden City office.

Steph is thrilled to be training again and having completed her full Level 2 Apprenticeship is just about to start Level 3. Steph explains that some of the units in the retail course at Hertford Regional College were administrative and that these combined with starting a Level 2 in Business Administration have helped her to build greater knowledge and understanding and to consolidate the learning from previous courses. There is an 'open door' to the trainers so she is never without support in her training.

**'I am meeting new people and learning new things all the time.'**

Steph is involved in compliance and checking individual learner records, becoming familiar with the software, helping the recruitment team with advertising vacancies and posting them on Apprenticeship vacancy site.



Steph and Zoe get to grips with the processes and procedures

## **Zoe's story**

### **Background**

Zoe has worked for JLT since May 2013 following a combination of study at college (English retake) and part-time shift work in Next. She left Barclay School in Stevenage at 16 with grade D's in Maths and English. Although she had studied hairdressing whilst at school and was offered an interview and a trial she quickly realised that this vocation was not for her. Zoe's first introduction to Apprenticeships was through Youth Connexions when in Year 11 she was sent a number of possible jobs and had help from a Personal Adviser with her CV. She struggled to secure a full-time job as she had no experience to offer an employer. She heard about the Apprenticeship at JLT on the radio. Zoe explained that she was put through a series of tasks and a 1:1 interview to secure the position.

At 19, Zoe has gained her Level 1 in Functional Skills and is now working towards Level 2. Her job involves compliance checking, inserting data accurately onto PICS to secure funding, and keeping the online portal up-to-date for tutors and learners. As a company they are working towards a paperless approach with all learner assessment records online and Zoe will have a part to play in making this transition as smooth as possible.

In May, Zoe completed her full Level 2 Apprenticeship in Business and Administration and is now working towards the Level 3. She can spend four hours a week developing her online Apprenticeship portfolio and five hours a month on her CPD logs although Zoe explained that if she needed more time she would be granted this as the company are very flexible in their

approach to the training of the Apprentices. Of her colleagues Zoe says they are very supportive with someone always being on hand to help.

In conclusion, Zoe says:

**‘Apprenticeships demonstrate early on that you are good at something. Friends who have spent time in university have to start all over again and at the bottom when they enter the workplace.’**

### **JLT Contact Details**

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**Opening times: Monday-Friday 8.30 am – 5.00 pm**