

CHARLOTTE LANGRIDGE

UNDERGRADUATE PLACEMENT STUDENT TO SALES SUPPORT



In the interview below, Charlotte tells us about her 12-month placement as an Undergraduate Placement Student at Centerprise to continuing to provide Sales Support to the Government Business Unit alongside her final year studies back at University.

What attracted you to a one-year placement with Centerprise and what did the role entail?

I was initially drawn to the Government Undergraduate Programme, as it detailed great exposure to multiple Business Units. As an Undergraduate studying a broad subject such as Business, this was the perfect opportunity to gain experience and insight into different disciplines, within one multi-functional placement.

My role commenced with a grounding in Internal Sales Support, which entailed managing daily sales related tasks with a key focus on customer satisfaction. Within this role, I was able to gain an understanding of the function of each department within the business and this was a great insight into how the Sales Cycle works within an organisation.

As my time at Centerprise progressed, my attention was focused on a Project Management based element, focusing on our Fire & Rescue client base; in particular, an extensive Mobile Data Terminal refresh which spanned across 7 Services throughout the U.K.

The final phase of my placement was focused on Marketing & Event Management and as such, I was entrusted with the responsibility of Event lead for Centerprise's Platinum sponsorship of Cardiff 2018 UKRO Challenge.

What knowledge did you gain, and which skills and disciplines did you develop which you will take away from your placement and utilise in your final year of studies?

I gained a broad understanding of hardware, software and IT service capabilities that are currently on the market, as well as gaining in-depth knowledge surrounding Centerprise's own portfolio of in-house services.

As part of my Project phase, I also had the opportunity to gain specialist knowledge regarding the IT needs of Emergency Service's and the solutions best suited to delivering World-Class, incident-critical responses.

University teaches you skills such as workload management and prioritisation at a base level, but by entering the workplace and utilising them daily, these skills become enhanced beyond recognition. Arguably, the most prominent skill I have taken away from my placement year is my ability to use my initiative; time sensitive tasks that require a split decision require the ability to think outside the box and draw on innovation.

What have you learned at Centerprise that has stuck with you the most?

The most memorable thing that I have learnt and adapted during my time at Centerprise, is a newly found mind-set. I have learnt to become someone that wants to find a solution, not an excuse and I will continue to apply this outlook to my final year at university and future career ventures.

What was your greatest achievement from your time at Centerprise so far?

My greatest achievement during my time at Centerprise, has to be winning the 2018 Dragons Den competition, which saw the 2017/2018 intake of Graduates and Undergraduates go head-to-head in an entrepreneurial style contest.

What was your favourite part and the most challenging aspect of your placement at Centerprise?

The most challenging aspect of my placement was workload management; supporting the Government Business Unit, which comprises of Local Government, Health, Education and Ci Wales, is arguably a full-time job in itself. As my placement progressed, adding into the mix a Project Management element and a Marketing & Events Management role, my workload grew significantly and upped the day-to-day tempo.

My favourite part of my placement has been all of the opportunities I have been given, which arguably a larger, more rigid organisation would not have provided. The flexibility of the different phases of the placement year allowed me to challenge myself in areas that are not typical of a placement student's remit; my role was dynamic and agile enough to be able to adjust to the demands and needs of the business.

How does working in a full-time role compare to your expectations prior to commencing your placement?

Undertaking a full-time role comes with full-time responsibility. You become a part of the team you work within and as such, you are accountable for the work you produce and the decisions you make.

How does your placement year compare to other employment or work experience you have undertaken?

The work I undertook during my placement year was much more detail-orientated than the previous roles I have fulfilled. Although I have worked in a customer service focused role before, the level of service expectation was significantly increased and became a pivotal aspect of each task I undertook.

What advice would you give to an undergraduate joining the business in a similar role, especially someone new to the IT industry?

- **Ask questions** – Don't be afraid to ask questions! If you are new to the IT industry, you may find yourself unsure of the technical aspect of your role, but there will always be a member of the team on hand to offer support.
- **Networking** – Your placement year will be invaluable in terms of making connections within the IT industry, both in and outside of Centerprise. Each individual that you meet will shape your learning and provide insight into different areas of business. Take the time to listen to your peers and their experiences, one conversation could change your whole perspective.
- **Challenge yourself** – Don't be afraid to get out of your comfort zone; put yourself forward for that additional task, ask for more responsibility, learn a new skill and ultimately, don't become complacent in your role; once you've mastered the fundamentals – push yourself for something more challenging.

Finally and most importantly, take the time to enjoy your placement year!