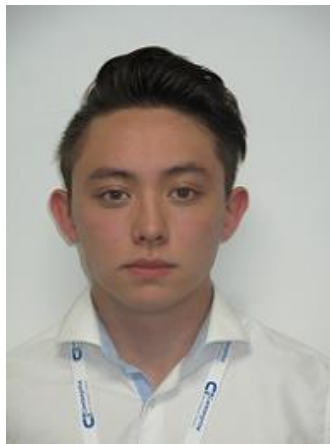


**EUAN FARROW**

**UNDERGRADUATE PLACEMENT STUDENT  
TO OUR GOVERNMENT BUSINESS UNIT**



In the interview below, Euan tells us about his Undergraduate Placement experience at Centerprise

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

My interest in a placement with Centerprise was predominantly due to the opportunities for development in the role through the year, which was a refreshing change from most other placements I had applied for which appeared rather static without any chance for progression. I was also encouraged by the calibre of employee I met during my interview process, as everyone I met, from my predecessor to one of the Business Unit Directors, impressed me with their professionalism and attitude.

My initial and primary role was based around the Government Admin team which deliver sales support to the Government Business Unit. Alongside my team members, I was responsible for quoting customers, processing their orders and dealing with any queries around these two areas. There was a significant amount of direct contact with Ci customers and account managers alike, making for an interesting and varied experience.

Throughout my placement year, as I in turn demonstrated I was capable in delivering my tasks, I was able to expand my day-to-day activities to include more sales-based jobs. This included going to events to promote Centerprise, shadowing account managers in client meetings and playing a part in the bid process. My main responsibilities still lay with Government Admin, however, the chance to gain exposure to the full sales cycle and the learning opportunities that arose from this was instrumental to my further education.

**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 have gained two areas of knowledge throughout my placement. The first being the knowledge of the IT industry, sales and the processes of a corporate company. Throughout the year it was impossible not to expand my current understanding of IT and the products I was dealing with on a daily basis. It also spurred me to proactively start learning about the more complex IT trends and upcoming issues within the industry.

The second type of knowledge would be more intrinsic and developed through discussion with my mentors throughout the placement and indeed through self-reflection. This led to improvements in my confidence, public speaking, maturity and professionalism.

Therefore, whilst some of the skills I learnt may not be directly applicable to my Law degree, skills such as time management and prioritising workloads certainly will. Also, the work ethic I developed will hold me in good stead for my final year of university.

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

There are many lessons that I have learnt that I will constantly refer back to, however, the most prominent for me right now is the endeavour for self-improvement. This was nurtured throughout my placement as Ci is very supportive of the development of undergraduates and is committed to enabling their professional success. This is a massive source of motivation for myself as I am constantly striving to learn more and develop myself both personally and professionally. This will only help me succeed in my final year of higher education and I'm sure will have a positive impact on my future career path.

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

My greatest achievement so far has to be assisting in a tender which required new relationships to be formed, both in terms of the supplier and the customer, as we had no previous dealings with either. We won this opportunity which was worth over £400,000.

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

The two most challenging parts of my placement were; settling into a new environment that was so alien to me and I found this difficult at the start. The typical '9-5' working day and the expectations on students to quickly become a professional employee, was a steep learning experience. However, I did manage to adapt and meet expectations within the first couple of months. The second element was with this new corporate environment came new internal processes to get accustomed to. This took much longer to adapt to. Although sometimes tedious, such processes I realised were necessary and useful to ensure diligence and a high standard of work.

One of my favourite parts was being able to interact with customers from the very start of the placement with varying degrees of contact throughout the year. This really developed my interpersonal skills and is a real benefit of Centerprise as other companies may not be so encouraging of students being customer facing.

I also did not expect to meet so many people who would take a genuine interest in me and my development. These members of the company would often check up on me, and to my surprise, offer opportunities that I may not have been privy to had they not taken the time to think of me. My main takeaway from this year will most certainly be the mentors I have gained and the knowledge they have imparted onto me. I plan to keep in contact with these people through my final year at university and hopefully for many years to come.

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

As is most students expectations (I believe), I did not expect to be adding any real value to the company and certainly not within the first few months. Within my first week I was proved wrong! Although it was understood and appreciated that I was only on a placement, there was still an expectation that I would be a fully functioning member of the team and I can say with certainty that I was a valued member of the team from start to finish.

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

Having worked in roles where customer service was a main focus I thought I would be well prepared for this role. However, it was soon apparent that the level of service Centerprise provides to its customers is well beyond that of which I was used to. This was encouraging to see as it was clear that the customer was always valued and came first.

Other work experience I have undertaken has been rather short-lived with my longest being a fortnight. A whole year with a company is a completely different experience. While it does feel as if it has flown by, the relationships you can develop in both a personal and professional capacity are extremely rewarding and should be as important to a placement student as any other aspect of the year.

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

The first thing I would say to any placement student coming into the business is to constantly challenge themselves, both within the role they have initially assigned to and any other further responsibilities they may take on during the year. Seek opportunities, do not wait for them to come to you because many won't without reciprocal effort. At Ci if someone sees an undergraduate excelling in their role and pushing for responsibilities and challenges it will not be ignored.

Secondly, whilst it is by no means an expectation that an undergraduate will have an extensive knowledge of IT and the industry, I would say there should be an intrinsic motivation to learn more about the industry you have chosen to work in. Asking questions is one of the best ways to educate yourself, there are always people who will be willing to take the time to teach and other resources made available to everyone.

Finally, make sure to make use of the other undergraduates working alongside you! I have made some great friends this year and they will be an incredible support network for you when you need them.