

Service-leavers and British Gas: National Apprenticeship Week case study

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08 Feb 2011, Daniel August, HRO



"I was in the Intelligence Corps for three years, undertaking surveillance and briefing officers on intelligence matters, as well as spending time in the odd trench or two.

"After leaving the Army, I wasn't entirely sure how to go about looking for a new job. What I was looking for was a career rather than just something to pay the bills. I wanted to get into British Gas and needed security as well as an enjoyable and challenging job, particularly as we have just had a baby daughter.

"It was a bit difficult after leaving the Army and I was fortunate that my wife left at the same time as me so we had each other for support. A lot of service-leavers struggle because it's such a big change and there hasn't always been the support.

"Visiting the website of ForceSelect, the recruitment consultancy for service-leavers, I came upon an advert for the apprenticeship with British Gas. ForceSelect was very helpful and gave me the advice and support I needed. I saw that ex-service personnel were exempt from the £16k training bond and so I applied to join British Gas late last year. I felt it would be an excellent opportunity to develop my skills and build a great future with a great company.

"In November 2010, I started as a service and repair apprentice and knew I had made the right choice. I was really impressed by the facilities in the training academy; it was all very professional, similar to the standards I'd become used to in the army.

"Strange to say, the roles are similar but different. The Army was a lot more physically challenging, of course, with lots of cross-country runs and strict fitness regimes, but the training aspects are surprisingly similar. The training plans in both bodies are well-structured and, to do the job well, each role involves both work on your own initiative and aspects of team-working.

"I enjoy being out on patch with the qualified engineers: they really help you and do their best to transfer their skills. I also enjoy chatting with the customers. I like learning new skills every day and the great team camaraderie that I have with my colleagues. Working well as a team is important and the academy encourages this aspect of the role. There are two other service-leavers in a group three months ahead of me and they are enjoying it greatly as well.

"It is very important that companies take a lead from the likes of British Gas and consider service-leavers when looking for new staff. We tend to be a lot more self-reliant and self-disciplined and are good at working both as part of a team as well as on our own.

"So I am looking forward to the day when I can go out to customers in my own van, representing British Gas. It will be good to be responsible for my own planning and time management and building important customer relationships.

"I am ambitious and would like to move onwards and upwards in the company, but I am not sure if that will be as a manager in the field or within the training department. I will make that decision as I gain more experience. I definitely believe there are lots of opportunities within British Gas to further my career."

HR is campaigning for more employers to give opportunities to ex-military personnel. For more details of our 'See the Best' campaign, please [click here](#)