

Catching up with our apprentices - Zicam

We thought it was about time that we caught up with our apprentices to see how they were progressing and what they thought about everything so far. Here's what Jake Shepherd, Louis Boxley and Dylan Cook had to say...

[How far along in your apprenticeship are you now?](#)

Jake: We're 7 months in - we all started at the same time in September last year and it's going really well.

Louis: We didn't know each other before but we've built a friendship since starting and we all help each other, so it's been good to have that support.

Dylan: I agree, it was really helpful starting at the same time as Jake and Louis, it's like having a ready-made support network.



(l-r) Louis Boxley, Dylan Cook, Jake Shepherd

[Is there any aspect of your apprenticeship that you particularly like?](#)

Louis: I like the fact that we're gaining life skills as well as practical ones. We're learning about communication with customers and how to work independently as well as part of a team - it gives you more confidence.

Jake: It's good also to apply the different skills we're learning to problem solving on the job - it makes you think about what you're doing and how to go about finding a solution.

Dylan: The travel keeps me really interested as well as the hands on learning. Zicam has customers across the country so we're always in different places and meeting new people.

[What do you think you're gaining by doing an apprenticeship?](#)

Jake: We're learning a trade that's going to set us up for life. The transferable skills we're developing give us different options as well, so if we ever wanted to down the tools and go into an office, we have that option. We're also getting paid to learn and you can't complain about that!

Dylan: We're learning technical skills and life skills and that, with the qualification we'll get, gives us loads of different options.

Louis: For me it's about learning there's a balance to the job between being hands on, having your college skills and doing external training courses. They all work side by side and make you better at your job.

Do you prefer the hands-on side to it, or the college-based training?

Dylan: I much prefer the practical side, I found it difficult at school to sit down in one place, so learning on the job is much better. Having said that, the college really interacts with you and makes sure that side of it is interesting.

Louis: Hands on for me as well. I've always been practical and I like being out and about and learning things from that perspective.

Jake: I'd rather be out learning but you can also go more in-depth in the classroom, you can take a closer look about how what you're installing works and how it's made. If you learn how it works then it makes it easier when you're on an install.

How are the other engineers with you?

Jake: The engineers are great. They always answer questions and never make you feel stupid for asking. You can have a laugh and joke with all of them but they're also supportive, you learn by doing the job and they're always happy to let you have a go.

Louis: Yes, you can ask for help any time but they get you to try and work it out yourself first. It's an enjoyable environment to work in, they're more like mates than just colleagues. I've been out on jobs a lot with Luke Allport who's one of the engineers and he's been great - he teaches well.

Dylan: It really helps that they get us working hands-on, it's easier to learn that way. They make it enjoyable; you can have a bit of banter as well as learning.

Do you think you'll stay in the industry after you finish your apprenticeship?

Louis: I'm happy with the role and would just like to progress and carry on learning new skills. The travel is great, every day is something different so it's always interesting.

Dylan: I'd like to stay with Zicam, I enjoy working here and feel lucky that I have the apprenticeship. Maybe in the future I'd try office-based work, but I'm happy doing what I'm doing now. There's always new equipment and technology coming out so you're always learning, which keeps you interested.

Jake: Same - I'll definitely stay within the industry, it's interesting and constantly developing.

What do you like most about working for Zicam?

Jake: They're supportive with training courses, we go on the same courses the engineers do and if you're uncomfortable with something they're more than happy to get you on a course so you feel more confident. They're also up front; they always reward hard work, whether it's an acknowledgement, a thank you or a bonus.

Louis: They look after you really well. They're very understanding and flexible and it's a relaxed environment. Everyone is helpful - they like to make sure that we're happy.

Dylan: They also like to set a good image with uniforms and vans - it sets you apart from competitors and gives you a sense of pride in your work.