

# Case Study: Training Officer/NVQ Assessor - Dan

## What do you do?

I work for a small independent training company, called Charnwood Training Group. I'm field-based and go where my contracts are. My areas are Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, and now Liverpool and Manchester as well.

I visit learners in their workplace every three to four weeks.

We also have a training academy, and we offer consultancy.



## What is your background?

I was working at a hotel as an assistant manager and it got to the point where I was doing seventy hour weeks and I was getting really tired and had no life, basically. I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I went through the job adverts in The Caterer and sent my CV off to a load of companies. One of them - a training provider - got back to me. After an interview, I was offered the job, so I thought I'd give it a go.

I started off as a trainee assessor, and learned on the job. I started with twelve learners, and I was monitored, shadowed and mentored, working towards the assessor qualification. I was there for a year and a half, before moving to my present employer.

Going further back: after school, I went to college and did a GNVQ in Hospitality, then I went to catering college and did a BTEC National Diploma in Hotel, Catering and Institutional Operations.

I went to university and started an HND in Hospitality Management, but it was too similar to the BTEC I'd done, so I changed onto the BA in Events Management. While I was doing that, I was working in the trade alongside it. I worked in some family-run pubs, then a city centre bar, then became front of house manager at a restaurant. After that, I moved to the hotel.

## What characteristics do you need to be successful in your job?

You need to have good people skills and you need to be able to build a rapport with people. At the end of the day, if I don't have a rapport with my learners, they aren't going to get the best out of the qualification, and they don't get the best out of the training I can offer them.

You need to be patient; sometimes you have a learner who has the knowledge, but is extremely shy and needs to have it drawn out of them.

You need understanding of how different people work. If you start treating your learners like they're at school, they're not going to enjoy it. It's their qualification at the end of the day.

There's a lot of paperwork and there's a lot of juggling. You need to be very flexible, adaptable and well-organised.

You need to have a lot of knowledge of what you're delivering, so you can answer learners' questions. There's a lot of stuff that you need to remember.

## What other jobs could you do using the skills from this job?

You could go into teaching or lecturing, in a college or university environment. We do consultancy work, so that's another area I could move into.

## What changes will there be in the future?

Different training and skills initiatives are being pushed, and the barriers have been opened to get people qualified up to a certain level. There are many more opportunities for learning coming through.

Work-based learning hasn't always had a good reputation, but it's getting so much better. I think a lot of people need the opportunity to focus on the skills they aren't so good at.

## What are the biggest challenges in your job?

Working on a monthly basis can be a challenge. At the beginning of a month, I see all my learners, prove learning within each visit, and then I have to assess to make sure all requirements and standards are met. There are a lot of balls that you need to juggle.

It's pressurised and you have a lot of targets to reach, and you're always checked. My internal verifier comes out and does observations of me, making sure that I'm meeting the standards correctly and assessing correctly. At the end of the day, it's the government's money, the people's money, that we're spending, and you can't just throw it around.

## Are there many opportunities to enter this career?

There are opportunities, but you need to be careful. Big companies are good to get started and qualified with, but from my experience, with a smaller independent training company, you're offering a better quality product.

## What do you like about your job?

I like the trust that's put in me. I like the fact that I organise my own month. I get a monthly one-to-one with my manager, where we go through all my learners and she checks that I've done everything. But basically it's down to me to plan my working day. As long as I hit all my targets - some of which I set myself - then I can be quite flexible.

## What do you dislike about your job?

It's very stressful; but I quite like that at the same time. The stress is what makes it exciting, but it's also what gives you a headache at night. There's ever such a lot of preparation to do, more than people might think. You have to make sure that you've organised and prepared everything before each visit.

## What are your ambitions?

I'd like to maybe venture into HR in training. Or move into doing training for a hotel or bar group, something like that: go in, set training programmes up and deliver courses. That's what I think I'd like to do.

I would never go back into hospitality and work for someone else. I'd have to own my own bar or restaurant.

## What advice would you give to someone interested in your career?

You've got to be really interested in it, because you've got to be able to process so many different things at once. It can be hard to pick up - you either get it or you don't.

You need to be realistic with your targets, and you have to be really well-organised. It's not a nine to five job.

It's quite a pressurised job, so you've got to love it, really. If you don't love it, you won't get it. You need to understand it and it can be quite difficult. There's a lot of terminology and restrictions; there's a lot to understand.

If you want to go into training you need to understand it from the bottom. That's what I'm doing, and that's fine with me.

I'm appreciated in this job, but in my last post I was just a number. If you've worked for big companies all your life and are happy with just being a number, go with big companies. If you're not, and you want to make a difference, the smaller companies are probably the ones to go with.

## A day in the life

The night before, I look at my diary to confirm my appointments for the next day. I'll update my online calendar, so my company knows where I'll be. I might also answer some emails.

I'll go onto our online database, which we use to register everything we do with a learner. I can also look to see if there are any notes on there from the office.

The next day, I'll leave the house at 9.30, to do an induction. This includes meeting a new learner or learners, to get an idea of what they are like, and making sure they understand that it's their programme, and that they will need to put the work in.

On an induction, we also check things like fire safety and that it's generally a safe environment for the learner to work in and for us to assess in.

Then I find out from the manager if there is anything specifically they want their employee/s to learn.

I'll leave there at one. I've got a new learner at a pub across town, who I inducted last month. At this visit, we'll choose the appropriate units and go over what we're going to do.

I'll leave a workbook for the learner to go through. I've got another learner at the same placement, and I've got an observation with her, so I'll see her working the bar - working the till, dealing with customers, following licensing laws and health and safety.

Then at five, I'll head up the motorway, to see a learner who's working in the kitchen of an Italian restaurant. I'll be doing some food preparation observation with him.

I'll finish at about seven. Because I've taken two days holiday this week, I'm working some long days. It's just the way it works out sometimes.