

Audio transcription

Apprenticeship Podcast: Episode 3 - Are you currently studying at University?

Host

Hi, this is Skills for Life, a podcast series where we hear from current and past apprentices at Scottish Power to find out why an apprenticeship is such a great career choice. In this episode I'm joined by María Valverde who's a Data Science Apprenticeship at Scottish Power and by Sean Wilson who did the Project Management Apprenticeship at Scottish Power and is now working as a Project Leader. So thank you both very much for coming in to talk to us.

María, I'll start with you. So you have just recently graduated from uni, is that right? And what were you doing there?

María Valverde

So, well, I'm originally from Spain and I moved to Glasgow in 2019 to start my university degree at Glasgow Uni. I did genetics for my undergrad. I graduated in June and I started the Data Science Apprenticeship degree at Scottish Power.

So, yeah, just recently joined.

Host

Oh, wow. I knew that wasn't a Glasgow accent. Of course.

So you came from Spain, you studied here in Glasgow, you finished your genetics course and now you are on the Data Sciences Apprenticeship programme. How's it going and what's involved?

María Valverde

So, well, so far when I was doing my undergrad, it was third year. Imagine I was having a lot of like lab work and everything and I found out that that was not for me. So basically in the fourth year I started doing more bioinformatics and all that and that's how I got into data science and thanks to a course I did in bioinformatics and coding and I decided to apply to Scottish Power for the data science degree because that was the way to open another door in bioinformatics or data science.

And so far it's going very well. I've started my course at university and I'm learning a lot and I'm very happy.

Host

Oh, good. Good to hear. How did you find out about the programme at Scottish Power?



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María Valverde

I found out on LinkedIn actually. I was looking through a few ads and everything and I found out about the programme and I really like the fact that they offer you to get a whole degree apart from getting work experience. So that's how I got interested.

Host

And how does it work? So do you do some time at uni and some time at work? Is it a combination of both or?

María Valverde

So basically what I do is I do four days at work and I work some of the days at the office and I work some of the days from home and I go to uni one day. That is my university day is Friday. So basically I'm just working for four days and going to uni the other day.

And most of the projects of university are work based. So I also get to work on university content during my four days because it's also related to the company and also about university.

Host

That sounds like a good balance. And Sean, you did the project management apprenticeship, or you did that, but you fast tracked out of it, didn't you? Yeah.

Just before we go into that, you actually were at university before, but you came out at uni to start this apprenticeship, didn't you?

Sean Wilson

Yep. So I went to uni for two years and to be honest, I didn't enjoy it that much. I didn't enjoy just doing theory.

So I wanted to join a workplace and learn skills of experienced people. So since I've joined, I've not regretted it one bit. To be honest, I've learned a lot of skills and developed myself massively too, in and out of the workplace through different challenges.

And to be honest, pressure has grown me as well within the workplace.

Host

And how does your setup work then? How does it work for you? Do you also do some work-based stuff and then stuff at uni?

Sean Wilson



Right now, it's nothing. But in September, I'm looking to go back at uni to finish the last two years and then look at any other possibilities moving forward. I feel as though that's my next steps is as much education right now to build strong roots.

Host

So when you did, what was your degree in?

Sean Wilson

Business Management.

Host

And then you thought it was maybe not quite for you. So you came out of that on to the Project Management Apprenticeship.

Sean Wilson

Yep.

Host

And then tell us about how you fast-tracked, because you're now employed. You've got a full-time job. This is you in Scottish Power.

Sean Wilson

Yeah, so I couldn't have imagined it. So it was a three-year programme. Initially, it was meant to be.

So I've got different projects to tackle throughout my two years as well. So to be honest, I kind of showed that I was willing to do anything. And I wasn't that as good with the practical, but I was good at rolling up my sleeves and getting on with it with challenges.

And such a big business like Scottish Power has always got challenges and opportunities. So I've kind of just adapted and learned each time and got a bit better each month and every day.

Host

And what business area are you in?

Sean Wilson

So I'm in Distribution. So it's under licenced programmes. And it's mainly focussing on net zero in terms of LCT people facilitating.

So people can go and get a car charger and a heat pump.

Host

So LCT, low carbon technology.



Sean Wilson

Yep.

Host

Just checking. So working with heat pumps and EVs, electric vehicles and all stuff that's going to help get to net zero. How do you find that?

Because that's an area and an industry that's really making a difference for the future.

Sean Wilson

It's massive, absolutely massive. Even talking to anyone outside of work, they always ask questions regarding what we're doing. The areas we are working in and modernising, it's places that I live.

So Lenzie, where I used to walk to school, we're doing everywhere there. Creighton, we're doing so many areas and it's just massive projects that I'm dealing with, which I'm enjoying as well.

Host

And if there is such a thing as a normal day for you, what does that look like at work?

Sean Wilson

Every day is different, to be honest. A Thursday is just all calls, but mainly it's managing a team, managing service partners. It's really hectic, to be honest, right now.

Onboarding eight service partners onto a contract with six new service partners onto this framework just keeps you busy all the time. So I like to keep an eight to four, but it's quite hard sometimes.

Host

I can imagine. And María, what's your sort of day to day? Talk us through what the data science, data sciences apprenticeship involves.

María Valverde

Yeah, I know data science is not very normal to many people. So I'm going to try to be as...

Host

Yeah, keep it simple. Keep it simple for us who don't know.

María Valverde

Basically, I work in the network data and intelligence area and my team is called ISD, that stands for Information System Development. So basically, my team works with all the



maps containing all the assets that the Scottish Power Energy Network has. So my team basically updates and keeps all the maps updated.

And basically, those maps are controlled by code. And that's what we do, because most of my job is coding with a computer. So yeah, I got many different projects and same as not every day is the same.

I got a lot of different projects of problems that can arise with the assets or things that need to be updated. So I can get from a list of assets that need to be updated to, for example, the last thing I did was creating a database to be able to contain all the transmission lines information to be able to manage them better. So it's very different every day and it's very stimulating because you get to actually solve problems.

Maybe it's not something that is like work that people from the public can see, but it's very useful and essential for any company because we have so many data that needs to be managed some way. So yeah, I really like it.

Host

Absolutely that when you talk about this idea of roles that maybe people don't see those sort of hands on roles, whether they're engineers or you know, something like that, that have a visibility to the public. But these roles are so integral to the sort of electrification that the country needs for the future to get to net zero. And they're huge, aren't they?

They're hugely important.

María Valverde

Yeah, for example, we were working with a map that actually all the engineers are able to use and see where the assets are and like the conditions and everything. So it's not something that is directly able to see from the public perspective, but it's very useful for the business too.

Host

So when you talk about assets, what are we talking about? Substations and stuff?

María Valverde

Substation, poles, transmission lines, overhead lines, all the things that the company owns, basically. They're recorded and there are so many. So those data needs to be managed and stored and updated to be able to first to know what the company has, second to be able for the engineers to fix and if there's a fault or manage.

Host

So it's a really sort of crucial role in helping the engineers and stuff as well to get to those assets and know what needs done. And in terms of when you joined, when you were



thinking about coming to Scottish Power, did you have a background or any knowledge of the energy industry?

María Valverde

Well, to be fair, well, this is quite an interesting story because last year when I was last year at university, I tried to escape from the genetic subject. So I picked a business course and the final project was creating a business idea or a startup. And my idea of a business company was about creating energy using two bacteria that already existed.

So basically, I took that idea to a business competition, and I came in like second place out of 24 teams. So that's how I got started into the energy world. And it's very funny because when I was creating my business idea, like the business model canvas and all that, I said that Scottish Power was going to be my main partnership to be because we were able to produce energy using those bacteria.

But after we need a partnership with somehow how to distribute and take the energy that we were able to produce to everyone. So when I was when I planned that in the business competition, I said that Scottish Power was going to be my main partnership and now I'm here working.

Host

And do your two roles sort of cross over because as you're in distribution, you said, Sean, and so as the project lead there and managing projects that you've probably had input to in your role at some point as well in terms of the data and there must be...

Sean Wilson

With the asset management part, it's huge. I didn't realise how important it is, like just different parts of the business. Just every day I'm learning something new about customer service, asset management.

And our project is basically ripping out cables that are at the end of their life and putting new ones in. So I think there is some sort of tie, but it seems pretty broad in terms of how much it does cover. Ours is quite specific in underground right now with houses.

We're mainly dealing with putting bigger cables, cable heads in houses. So ours is a wee bit more specific to what we're doing right now.

Host

Although had that said, it's funny how with one of the main sort of themes of this is skills for life and how the skills that you have, that you learn in the workplace can be transferable and applicable to loads of different industries and areas. And I think even, although you're saying you're in a quite sort of specific technical role and project leads



and manager for that, you've also mentioned the fact that you're also, you know, you're dealing with customers, so customer service and communication and...

Sean Wilson

Commercial. There's so many elements, definitely, that our framework's taught me about dealing with eight service partners is ups and downs and eight different business owners. It definitely teaches you a lot, definitely.

Host

Because I think, and again, another sort of theme coming through from these podcasts that we've been doing is that there's so much more to Scottish power than electricity sort of thing or than engineers. And it's just this idea that there's such a whole broad spectrum of areas to be involved in. What would you say is one of the most surprising things that you've found in your time so far?

Sean Wilson

I would say the amount of opportunities in the business. I'd say the opportunities and the wealth of knowledge, to be honest. I feel as though the amount of help that I get and the amount of people that are experienced in the business is unbelievable.

I can phone up, basically, loads of people in the business and ask for help and they'll always help me. I've got people in my department that have worked for Scottish Power in America, people that are district general managers like Ayrshire, Aileen Ruick, that I could phone and ask for help. Andy Gallacher.

I feel as though there's that much experience that it's just taking me to a stage I never thought I would have got without the help of people like that.

Host

And I think that's one of the good things as well about coming into a big company on an apprenticeship scheme, be it graduate or entry level or whatever. There's this sort of concept of being able to join what is a global company with so many different aspects to it, but still having some kind of support, you know, tight knit support to actually help and enable you to flourish in that role.

Sean Wilson

Yep, 100%. The amount of opportunities, whether I could go into renewables in the future, transmission in the future, just the amount of doors. I was at, it was like a meeting when Vicky Kilsaw came in and Keith Anderson and Keith was talking about, there's not a job here we can't offer.



There's that many opportunities and I'm really taken back by that going, if you look at it, there is so many doors to open.

Host

Somebody else mentioned that in a previous series as well, or a previous episode, in that those people at the top, Keith Anderson, the overall head of Scottish Power and Vicky Kilsaw of SP Energy Networks, the fact that these people are so accessible and are so keen to communicate with staff, but also not just one way, it seems to be a two way stream. And somebody else had mentioned that they're keen to hear from people who are in the business, so they want fresh ideas and they want you to bring these ideas to them and to question things and to provide solutions. And it seems like it's a really good two way stream.

Sean Wilson

100%. Yeah, I've got a meeting basically with my line manager every week and we sit with the SPD distribution director, Craig Arthur, and there's multiple times I've presented business cases to him and he's accepted or he's told me, you're wrong. There's a few, definitely I've learned a lot of sitting with somebody in a room and it makes you have that 360 view to go away and think there's multiple options.

And sometimes you need to take away and bounce ideas off people that are more experienced off you. And I think that's just a way of growing. It's just bouncing off different ideas of people and seeing how that solution applies to them.

Host

Have you found a similar experience, María?

María Valverde

Yeah, honestly, my experience, it's been short because I started in September, but it's been great so far and I've learned so many things. And well, I don't know if I'm a data scientist yet, probably not, but I've learned a lot of problem solving skills. For example, the ability to like when they give you a problem and maybe you're not going to see the solution instantly, but I've learned to not stress, see what I need to do first, do it if I can, if not, ask, because as he was saying, like that's the advantage of being not enough, well, being learning a skill that you can ask.

And there are many people who knows more than you, so you can actually go and say, can you help me with this? And yeah, I've learned a lot in problem solving and divide the problem step by step and see what I can do, see what needs to be done. And actually, I found out that that's the way to solve problems.

And actually, at the end, you've solved them and it was easier than you were thinking, but it's just like not stress and see what needs to be done and do it. It's as simple as that. And



I think that's also important, not for the work, not just for university, but also for life in general.

Host

Yeah, absolutely. A whole lot of transferable skills. In terms of your kind of day to day, what does that look like?

Do you have a normal day or is every day different for you as well?

María Valverde

I think every day is different. Well, sometimes I'm working on the same projects for a week or for two weeks, but basically they give me a problem that has to do with data that I need to solve. So just using my skills or the things that I know so far or information, I am able to solve the problem.

So it's very intellectual, stimulating, I will say, and I'm really enjoying. Well, basically, because if you think of a data scientist, you will think of someone just coding with a computer every day, but it's actually not the same. You actually are coding to do something.

So those things are different. So it's not as boring as it looks. So, yeah, I would recommend it to everyone.

Host

And is there anything that has surprised you about your time so far?

María Valverde

Yeah, honestly, how well I can do time management when I have to like actually sit and do things, because I was the kind of a student that get good grades, but I leave everything to the last minute. So I was horrible with deadlines. I've done so many all-nighters and now I've learned to manage my time better because I'm at the office and I also get to do university things.

And I've surprised myself like doing submissions like one week or more before the deadline, which was not imaginable for me before.

Host

I know how you feel with that. I'm still like that. In terms of when you think back to when you were at school and going on to university, did you have in your mind then, because we've spoken to some people who found that process or that whole situation, I'm sure it's common with so many people, you get to that stage at the end of school and you think, I don't exactly have a career in mind or, you know, a dream job.



So, yeah, it's quite daunting. What kind of, what subjects did you guys both take at school and then on to, we know you've done at university, but what about at school level were you?

María Valverde

So, well, as you can imagine, data science was not the job that I was dreaming when I was a child, but now I love it. So basically when I was in high school and at the school, I always loved maths. But when I was finishing high school, I got more into biology and genetics.

And I thought that it was a really new field. And I had so many ideas of things that I wanted to create. So I think that's why I wanted to study genetics.

But when I was there, I found out that research was not for me. And maybe I didn't see myself working in a lab full time. And the research world is more, it's not like you go into the lab and you can do whatever ideas you have in your mind.

It's more like you have to be working in someone else's project until you have two PhDs and that's 30 years after. So it's not like you actually contribute as I was imagining. So when I found that out, maybe it was late to drop out from university because I was in third year and I had one more year left to finish.

So I was so glad that I found this opportunity because I've always loved maths and numbers and I found that I was much more efficient and better working with numbers than reading a paper like a research paper that I just couldn't really do it. And so I was so glad I found that out at the end. But I also say that if you don't like your degree, don't continue doing it because the work is what matters after and you have to do that for the rest of your life.

So now I love what I'm doing and I'm so happy I found this.

Host

That's amazing. That's really good to hear. And talking about sort of coming out of uni and you've had the same experience, Sean, and that's something I think that is a really positive example of a situation that some people might see as a negative.

You know, I'm not liking this course. I'm going to stop the course. I'm going to stop doing the course.

But then to pick up in a company that still allows you to have a career, to train in other aspects and to get further qualifications. That's a really positive thing, isn't it?

Sean Wilson

Yeah, 100 percent. Anything basically for their education, I've always been supported as well. And I'd say the main thing is probably leaving school.



I only thought uni was my only option and that's kind of all I was told. And even when I was leaving uni, my dad was trying to sway me, stay, stay. And it was the best decision of my life, to be honest, to leave.

And it was quite a powerful decision to drop out of uni and go for an apprenticeship. But I look back and go, I wish I'd done it straight after school and went into Scottish Power, either from the tools apprenticeship and learned that aspect or like the project management aspect. 100 percent, I would go back and do an apprenticeship leaving school.

Host

Wow, really?

Sean Wilson

Yeah, 100 percent. And I say that with my wee cousins as well. I always say, look at apprenticeships.

That's about 100 percent I would take. And then go for your further education, go and build your wealth of experience and your knowledge.

Host

Yep. And what about the subjects that you had done at school before you went to university at first? What had you taken?

Sean Wilson

Maths and physics, really. So I quite like numbers as well. That was kind of my approach.

I liked numbers, dealing with that. So dealing with the commercial aspect and spend as well. There's just so many aspects I've dealt with that kind of suit my personality as well and what I wanted to do.

But I'd say a lot of things I see and the fear I had coming in to spend in Scottish Power was I didn't have technical knowledge. I didn't have an electrical background. But I think you come in with your own skill set and that's why you're in that business.

You're not there to be an engineer. You're not there to be a joiner. I'm there to be a project manager and develop, kind of bring my own skills to the party.

Host

Yeah, absolutely. And again, that's going back to this notion of coming to Scottish Power and the energy industry, you don't actually need to have that engineering background or you don't need to be an expert in whether it's renewable energy or, you know, aspects that spend cover. That's so technical, I can't even think of the words for them.



How do you keep yourself motivated through your apprenticeship? Because, you know, I suppose, does it ever feel sometimes like you're doing a bit of one thing and a bit of the other in terms of, you know, a bit of uni and a bit of work? Does that ever jar?

And if so, how do you keep yourself motivated?

María Valverde

Well, also related to what you were saying before, I think doing an apprenticeship is all about attitude. It's because you don't have that much technical knowledge. It's go there and say, here I am to learn what needs to be done.

So, yeah, for me, well, also coming back from doing a different thing at the university now, I keep myself motivated because I actually like what I'm doing. And it's so easy when you don't like it. I found out because I was doing for four years something that I didn't really like and I was maybe not brave enough to drop out and I finished it.

So, yeah, I think that's my way to keep me motivated. First, actually do something that I like. And second is the fact that you're seeing how you're like evolving and like improving every day and learning many new things is also very good.

And I don't know, it gives you hope to continue and see that you're doing things well and they're having an impact on like the business. So, yeah, I think it's very good.

Host

Can you think of any examples of a sort of day or a project that you've worked on that you've thought, wow, I would never have seen myself doing this?

María Valverde

Yeah, actually, the first one that I did when I went to Scottish Power was, well, it was basically they were getting some data that some other team created and they have to apply them to another assets to see if they match. Basically, my task was there is a number that every asset had that is it has to do with some rules and it's a rule of like maybe like 50 rules. So basically, my task was having those rules into account.

I had to see if the number changed or not. But the problem is that there were like four million assets that I had to check. So obviously, you cannot do that like one by one.

So I had to create a script using like, basically, I created some logarithms to see if what happens to the assets of like with the new data, if the number was changing, was staying and if it was changing, like what number was the new one. So I had to basically create a way to automatise that. So the computer will do that for me and I don't know, using logic



and like more things, I created a script that was able to check that and give a new number to the four million assets maybe that we were looking at.

So and that worked. So I was really happy.

Host

And I'm just really confused because my brain can't cope with that.

María Valverde

No, yes. Yeah, I don't think I explained myself very well.

Host

Oh no, you did. It's me.

María Valverde

It's me.

Host

Your explanation was perfect. I'm just saying that I don't have a logical brain.

María Valverde

Yeah, it was basically like using some logic, applying some rules to a data set. It's more like a game. It's like what happens to this number when you're applying a new situation?

And thanks to the computer and like a script that I created, I was able to do that automatically and not having to do that four million times.

Host

And what about you, Sean?

Sean Wilson

Probably responsibility, just a lot of responsibility on me at times with things that when I was an apprentice as well, my first year I was doing a project for basically the, it was the district's involvement as well. So it was involving health and safety as well. So we had age jobs that were ranging back a number of years and we basically got a notice of contravention.

So I got that responsibility of managing that project. So I think things like that, when you've got that, it doesn't feel like motivation. You just need to do it.

It's like discipline. And also people like Andy, who was my manager, Gerard, who's my manager, they set good standards when you're kind of in your youth so that, you know,



you need to come in every day and it's almost like a stand up every day, what you're doing, but it doesn't become motivation. You just build those good patterns and behaviours.

Host

Yeah, just becomes a way of life or second nature of your professional life.

Sean Wilson

And you take that out of work too and you're probably better managing your time as well with other things as well. So definitely things I've taken in and out of work and applied it and it's worked.

Host

Do you think in your roles there are certain skills and attributes that really help? I mean, you mentioned discipline there and that's probably something that you've honed in this role. Are there any other skills or even personal attributes that help along the way?

Sean Wilson

I'd probably say confidence to ask questions, to ask questions, continually ask questions. I came into the business and I thought I wasn't good enough at the start and it's because I didn't ask questions. Nobody knows all the answers.

You just need to keep, you need to be annoying at the start and ask questions. You just need to keep asking questions and questions and I've got two new people in the business that are in my room as well that are under myself and I just say, don't be afraid to ask questions, just keep asking questions because I hated the feeling at the start where I was too nervous to ask questions and that held me back. Probably spent six months where I was at the start the same to what I was in six months time at the start of my career and then once I just became more comfortable and built up that confidence, I just started clicking.

I just started getting better.

Host

And I think that's a great message because I think it's such a common occurrence of feeling that, that, you know, even it doesn't even have to do with age. Anybody starting a new role at any age or point in life, they always feel nervous. Nobody likes being the new person and there's this sort of weird feeling that if you ask questions, it's because you don't know, you know, or you're, you're frightened to ask questions in case people know that you don't know that, but actually it's the most sort of, it's the best way to, to learn.

It's the best way to, and funnily enough, people often say that when, when other people ask questions, actually I didn't know that either. And then all of a sudden you have this sort of common ground to people saying, I'm really glad they asked that question. And



there does seem to be a culture in Scottish power where that is fostered and welcomed this idea of asking questions and learning.

Have you found that?

María Valverde

Yeah, definitely. No one, no one can know everything. So it's better to ask something if you don't know it.

And maybe you find out that you know something, but the, another person doesn't know and like the other way around. So it's very good to communicate and be able to learn new things, not just from like the internet, but also from other people that maybe has different background than you or is very interesting to be fair.

Host

And what do you think about the, the future? Now you've obviously got your, a bit of a plan in place and that you were saying education is really important. And this has enabled you to also sample a bit of proper work life, if you like.

Um, once you do the further study that you're thinking about, do you have your sights set on a particular career or role or?

Sean Wilson

I think I've done that before as well, and I've probably rushed things. And I think this time I've kind of got goals as to stay motivated, but I feel as though I'm, I'm definitely just trying to take my time and make sure I deliver what I'm doing now and keep my blinkers on. And then I know if I focus on the inputs, the outputs will come.

So to be honest, I'm, I've not got a site of actually a hundred percent of what I want to do, but I know each kind of project I do, I kind of want to nail and then move up to that next opportunity. Because last year talking about one of the things I didn't think I could do was basically our investment delivery was 2 million pound a month and my project. So it was massive and I've never kind of experienced that commercial aspect.

So I think just building up sort of a portfolio and experience and CV and taking it year on year, it'll take me where I want to be.

Host

So how do you prepare for things like that? Then, you know, we're talking about coming into a new business and a, an apprenticeship scheme, um, I know you're now working in the business, but in terms of get, you know, taking those first steps into those areas or projects where there's, there is a lot of responsibility, there's a lot riding on it. You think?



Sean Wilson

To be honest, you can't prepare for it. You just, you just get, you get punched and you get back up. You kind of learn.

And there's so many people that I've seen that they do give advice if you ask the questions and there is that amount of support that I can't believe that I do bounce ideas off people constantly that annoy them. Uh, so things like that, I think you just get better each stage and even people at the very top of making mistakes daily and people at different stages in their career are making mistakes. So I've kind of just taken, even this year, I'm kind of trying to take week on week, try to create a journal of kind of positives I've done, negatives I've done and take it into the next week and make sure that I learn from it.

Host

Do you do that every week?

Sean Wilson

I'm trying to do that to just to make sure.

Host

That's a good idea. I'm going to try that. But that's a really good way.

Even that, I suppose, in business speak would be goal setting and evaluation and all that sort of stuff. And these are skills that employers ask for and things that you're doing without maybe necessarily putting that name to them. But that's exactly what that is, isn't it?

Sean Wilson

Yeah. Yeah. It just, I find that annoying making the same mistakes funnily enough.

So I like learning and I don't like not knowing. So I like taking that step every time and making sure that I'm not that idiot making the same mistake and walking into a meeting where it's management and I'm going, I've done it again. I kind of like going, this is the steps I've taken to make sure it never happens again.

Host

And what about you? Do you have a goal or a job or something that you really are focused on and that's where you're heading or?

María Valverde

Well, I'm just at the beginning of my programme, but I do know that I want to be a data scientist, but I never rule out the idea of like maybe having my own energy business at some point and like collaborate and be able to produce energy using bacteria. That would be very cool. So, but I know I do want to be a data scientist.



So yeah.

Host

Maybe you could link up and you could project manage. Yeah. So María, when you started your apprenticeship and obviously you had come from uni and you what was that like?

Because we did talk about the sort of application process and then what were the first few weeks like? And did you think, oh, I've made the right decision here.

María Valverde

So, well, when I came into the business, the first thing that I did was going to a three days induction where I got to meet all the other grads and many people that was in the same situation as me were just finished uni and they were joining the business. So that gave me a lot of confidence that I was not actually alone. There were so many in my situation.

And after I went for two weeks to Hoylake, that is one of the training centres. And I got to learn so many things about Scottish power, what they do, things about electricity, all the things that they manage, how Scottish power is involved in some other things. So that was really good because I was actually confident that I make the right choice because I enjoyed so much the training and I would like to go back and I love the company and Scottish power is actually involving so many good projects.

So that was my first week. And right after that, I went to the office for the first time and that's where I met my team and I found out what I was actually going to do. And I started uni.

So it was all it was so many things at the same time. But for me, it was very enjoying. I love it there.

Host

Oh, great. And Sean, what about you as well? What were the first few sort of days and weeks like when you started your apprenticeship?

Because I guess given the route that you came in as well, you might have been in two minds because you had already been in a course that you came out from to join. So how did that work?

Sean Wilson

So I remember I went up to the lane and I remember just seeing guys doing overhead line poles and just different things joining as well. And I just thought like joining this company, it was an absolute beast. And I just thought, to be honest, I was looking at it and going, I've made the right call.



But I did have a bad first week. I turned up to HQ and I was meant to turn up to St Vincent Crescent. So ten minutes to nine, I had to strap my backpack and just sprint with a suit on down to there.

So I don't want to do that again, to be honest.

Host

But did you write it in your journal and then you never made that mistake again?

Sean Wilson

I think that wasn't at that stage, but I've definitely learned from it. I didn't need the journal.

Host

And just in terms of the sort of support that you get, we've already spoken about that kind of natural support network from other people in your cohort. But in terms of, well, I suppose we've covered it insofar as you've spoken about being able to lift a phone to anybody in your business area. That's obviously something that's really important for people who are coming in new to the business.

Sean Wilson

Yeah, yeah. No, 100%. I think it just takes time.

And I think it's the first week probably will, depending on if you've come from school, if you came from uni, it will take a wee bit of time to adjust. But I've not really seen anybody that's left that's not enjoyed it right now. I've got people in my team that's, well, I've got somebody in my team that's an apprentice the year below me and he enjoys it every day as well.

So and there's a couple in licenced programmes that are just, at the start, probably found it a little bit difficult just from school, from uni. Then some people come in just depending on their personality. Some come in and love it.

But I think eventually everybody gets there. It's just taking time to adjust it because you're coming into a business where people are near retirement, people are middle aged, people are at the start of their career. It's challenging for people coming in.

Host

Have you had similar experience?

María Valverde

Yeah, well, my team at work is recently new, but they make sure we have the support. For example, I have a mentor that I can talk to every day if I feel like or if I have any problems.



And not only that, but also I found that from university, I also have a lot of support because doing an apprenticeship degree is different from a normal one.

When I was at Glasgow Uni in the first year, we were 800 in my class and I had no contact with my professors. But now we're only six, seven people in my class. And so when I know that I can always contact any of my professors and they will get back to me.

For example, I had a problem a few weeks about a database and I emailed one of my professors and she video called me and explained everything and solved the errors. So it's not just about the work, it's also at universities and different type of degree, you get a lot of support and they understand that you're working with real data. So you always have support and same as everyone that I know in my team.

You're basically not alone.

Host

And just lastly, then, what are the benefits you think of coming in to the business by the route that you have? Would you recommend it to others?

María Valverde

I will 100% recommend it because when you go to uni, normal uni, you are learning so many technical knowledge and everything, but you are not actually learning how to work. So it gives you the opportunity to learn things, apply them in the real world setting and be also learning how to work and be in a world like a setting and how to interact with other people. And I don't know, I think it's very useful for because when you are at university, you many, many times learn things that you never use again and you forget them.

But here is literally like, do you learn something? And you're applying that the day after. So you actually learn and not forget the things.

Host

I love that phrase that you're learning to work or you don't learn to work at university, but you're doing it here because it's so true, isn't it? You get taught at university all the theory, I suppose. And then but then when you're actually having to not only put that theory into practise, but having to do it in a work environment.

That's something that you never get. You can't teach that to anybody. You can only experience it once you're in.

So, yeah, that's a good phrase. And what about you, Sean?

Sean Wilson

I'd say the exact same. To be honest, it's just a case. It's not a straight line.



You're learning at different stages and then just applying it. It's a completely different university. And I think it definitely is the better route.

And then go back to uni in the future if you require it. A lot of people in uni, even my age, I'm 22, I see a lot of people leave uni as well in my year because they didn't know what they wanted to do. They go in and they end up leaving.

And that is a big thing. It's doing something you like and coming in and doing an apprenticeship. This business is so big that if you don't like it, there's another opportunity there that you can kind of move a wee bit.

María Valverde

I was going to add that is completely true. When you're in high school during the last year and you don't know what you want to do in life, you know what subjects you like at the school. So it's very difficult to make a decision that is going to affect the rest of your life.

So I wanted to add that there are many pathways and there are so many opportunities. And doing an apprenticeship degree, I think there are so many opportunities and ways to change in case you think you haven't made the right decision that it can happen all the time.

Host

True. Thank you so much, both of you, for really invaluable insights into your pathway into the business and your thoughts on the future as well. And best of luck with all of that.

To María Valverde. Did I say that right? Yeah. María Valverde.

María Valverde

Yeah! María Valverde.

Host

Yeah, perfect. Data Sciences Apprenticeship at Scottish Power. And to Sean Wilson Project Management Apprenticeship, now Project Leader at Scottish Power.

Thank you so much for your time, both of you.

María Valverde

Thank you.

Sean Wilson

Thank you.

A big thank you to all of our apprentices who took the time to talk to us.





It's been an amazing insight into life on an apprenticeship programme at Scottish Power. If you would like to find out more about any of the programmes that we've discussed, just visit our website, [scottishpower.com forward slash careers](https://scottishpower.com/forward/careers).



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