

Toni Pitts

Chartered Manager Degree Apprentice at Pearson College London



From Mum to Manager - how apprenticeships transformed the career of one work returner

Toni Pitts returned to work with a young child when she started working for Pearson in 2005. With only a handful of formal qualifications, she wanted a career that would fit in with looking after her young son James on a term-time only basis. Her first role was making appointments for Pearson Primary sales reps. Toni herself admits at the time her confidence was low and her aspirations limited.

She was given the opportunity to start an apprenticeship in Customer Services Level 2 and by the end of the apprenticeship her whole outlook had changed. She says of this time in her life 'the apprenticeship gave me lots of confidence and the ability to leave my comfort zone and made me realise - I *can* do this'. She adds, 'I became part of the larger team and started adding my ideas. I moved into the Secondary Schools division and the confidence I gained made me realise I could progress further'.

Toni applied for a Team Leader role and was promoted in 2009 - leading a team of six. She then started a Team Leader Level 2 apprenticeship. This helped her gain more confidence as well as raising her profile within her team and wider business. Toni thinks the belief and support of her line manager also made a huge difference at this point in her career.

She then moved to Pearson's Further Education division and completed a third apprenticeship in Management Level 3. Since then, Toni has progressed even further. With her manager's support and encouragement, she is now taking a Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship with Pearson College - her fourth apprenticeship in her 12-year career with Pearson.

Despite being the oldest person on her course, she believes she has learned a lot from the younger people she studies with and they in turn have benefited from her experience and real-world knowledge. She is choosing her modules carefully to match her role focusing this year on people management and contract law - both subjects that have a practical application to her day job.

Toni believes that apprenticeships have transformed her career and enabled her to learn whilst continuing to work for the company she loves. She also proves that you don't have to 'job hop' in order to progress and that for employers willing to invest and believe in their talent, apprenticeships can be a fantastic way of retaining dedicated people.

And what of James - Toni's little boy who was just seven when she took her first apprenticeship? He's now 21 and is part way through an apprenticeship of his own.