

A white fighter jet, likely an F-16, is shown from a rear-quarter perspective, flying towards the viewer. The aircraft is heavily armed with various missiles and pods under its wings. The background is a bright blue sky with large, fluffy white clouds. The image is partially overlaid by a dark blue geometric shape in the top right corner.

 **Class of 2020**

EAST OF ENGLAND
APPRENTICESHIPS

JOB ROLE

Business
Administration

COMPANY

MBDA UK

COMPANY SIZE

1001+ employees

APPRENTICESHIP

Higher Apprenticeship
in Business
Administration

■ INTRODUCING SARAH TOMAN

Sarah started her business apprenticeship in 2016 with MBDA UK, a defence company based in Stevenage, Hertfordshire. The structure of the programme would allow Sarah to gain experience in a wide range of sectors within the business, as she completed short placements within HR, purchasing, procurement and commercial departments to name a few. This would allow her to make informed choices moving forward with her career, as she understands each element of the business but also decides what she enjoys doing most within the company.

Whilst completing her A Levels, Sarah realised that business studies was an area she thoroughly enjoyed which encouraged her in to doing an apprenticeship along these lines. She was slightly hesitant at first, also applying for universities in case the apprenticeship route didn't work out. After weighing up her options, the varied approach of the programme appealed more than committing three years to a single course, so she decided to go ahead with an apprenticeship.





Sarah also liked the idea of combining work with her studies, as she would receive 'on the job' training too. Although she felt as though she was going 'against the grain', with a lot of her friends taking the university route, she is very happy in hindsight to have made the decision that she did.

Initially, Sarah found that she was overwhelmed when she started her position and had to complete research to understand the different areas of the business. She quickly found her feet, as colleagues assured her that understanding specific processes within the business would come with time. So, although initially daunting, Sarah saw the programme as a great opportunity to continue learning and develop her skillset within a business setting. One month in to the programme, Sarah started her degree and would spend one day a week completing coursework and assignments to fulfil her commitment to this.

The biggest perk of the programme for Sarah, was the breadth of experience it has provided her with across all sectors of the business. At just 22 with 4 years experience within the company, she has stated that she is a 'completely different person' since starting, now feeling much more confident in her abilities and comfortable communicating with colleagues at all levels. At times, she feels she has been 'thrown in the deep end', for example, having to present to senior colleagues, and although daunting at first, credits these experiences for aiding her development the most. Additionally, Sarah feels that she is much more effective in working as part of a team and is comfortable taking the lead when required.

As an MBDA apprentice, Sarah has also had the opportunity to get involved with extra curricular activities too — taking part in speaking events and careers fairs within local schools, talking to students and even running charity events. Sarah also cited her enjoyment around the networking element of the programme and has developed friendships with other apprentices whilst also supporting one another with programme coursework.

In terms of milestone achievements, Sarah was awarded a regional award for 'business apprentice of the year' for her outstanding commitment and effort towards the programme. Due to winning this, she qualified for the national apprenticeship awards and was a runner-up at the ceremony. She was extremely proud to be recognised for her hard work, and MBDA went on to publish the news to their company intranet too. This led to Sarah receiving merit internally too, as the commercial team acknowledged Sarah's development by awarding her the business apprenticeship award. The next milestone for Sarah, and potentially the biggest, was completing her degree in business studies and achieving a first class honours.

On the ground in the company, Sarah completed the final nine months of her apprenticeship with the commercial team and has made the decision to continue in this team as a full-time employee. The timing seemed to be perfect, as a new project had just begun within the department and Sarah was entrusted with managing this. Being given the responsibility to lead on something of such importance to the business further solidified Sarah's confidence in her new role, which she has continued to thrive in.



Sarah stated that she had extremely supportive line managers throughout and came to find that a lot of the staff members within MBDA had previously completed similar apprenticeship programmes, giving them a deeper understanding and therefore ability to support effectively. The value of working alongside people who have completed similar schemes was enormous, and Sarah viewed her mentors as role models throughout.

In terms of challenges, time management was a testing area “balancing your workload is a skillset within itself and worrying about tasks in your day job whilst also trying to complete studies and a degree can be tricky at times”. With the studies and achievement behind her, Sarah is appreciative of the opportunity to currently focus solely on her day job.

Today, Sarah is working through the internal career stages and is working towards a management position within the company—a position she has her eyes firmly set on. This will give her additional responsibility, such as coaching team members and helping apprentices through their placements—something Sarah is keen to do given her experience and knowing the value this can bring to people.





In terms of advice, she says that anybody considering an apprenticeship should do as much research as possible to ensure they make the right decision for themselves. Where she was inclined to follow friends and take the university route, she is extremely grateful to have carved her own path. Moreover, she has achieved a degree without the onus of student debt as it was fully funded by the business and has the benefit of four years' work within the industry to champion her new found knowledge and skillset too. As a final note, she stated that work experience is so important — and if you are considering an apprenticeship within a company, potentially looking to work with them for a short period of time might be the experience you need to solidify the move.

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AS YOU CAN BEFOREHAND
TO MAKE SURE YOU MAKE THE
RIGHT DECISION FOR YOURSELF”**



CELEBRATING APPRENTICESHIPS

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