

Sarah Budby

In 10 years I have gone from a Customer Service Advisor at Natwest Telephone Centre to the Site Finance Manager at XPO Logistics (M&S Distribution Centre). This is my story!

At school I had a passion for music and maths. After my GCSE's I started to think about what I wanted to do as a career and thought that realistically the music dream was just that, a dream and that I should probably look for a career which had something to do with maths, or what my parents called, "a proper job". That's when I decided to become an accountant.

After my GCSE's and A'Levels I didn't want to go to University due to the cost and I wanted to do an apprenticeship that provided me both experience and qualifications. I went for an assessment day at Pricewaterhouse Coopers at the age of 17 and noticed that I was the only female there. It did put me off a little and at that point I wasn't sure this was the company for me. After getting through all the tests I unfortunately was not offered an apprenticeship, so I decided the only way to follow my plan to become an accountant was to go to University after all.

I went to Bradford University School of Management and after 4 years got my degree in Finance and Accountancy. As part of my degree I did a placement year to gain some experience, in order to help me get a job after graduation. The placement was working at RBS Insurance as a MI Analyst. I was given quite a lot of responsibility for a junior member of staff looking after the KPI reporting for the biggest client Tesco Insurance. I obviously did something right as I was offered a permanent role after I graduated which included study support for me to get my chartered accountancy qualification. This was hard work but I was determined to finish it and progress in my career. Nothing or no one was going to stand in my way!

After 18 months of studying and exams I qualified. I did various roles at RBS Insurance to add to my experience in different areas of finance from budgeting and forecasting, to project work assessing potential suppliers for business worth c.£350m. Then RBS went through the government bailout and as part of the deal were made to sell the insurance division. Directline Insurance floated as a separate company. I was asked to be the employee representative for finance, which meant that I was involved in setting the culture and values of the group. I got to meet the CEO of Directline and he really listened to what I had to say and made me feel valued. Unfortunately a year later Directline decided to close some of its buildings and as such all of finance was made redundant, as they were moving the department from Leeds to London. I decided to use this opportunity to have a complete change in industry and looked for a role in retail. The only problem was I had no retail experience.

I ended up accepting a job at International Procurement & Logistics Ltd which is part of the Walmart group and procure products for Asda and Walmart stores. I was offered this role due to my experience in project accounting. This gave me the opportunity to develop my retail industry knowledge and I found I loved the fast paced environment that supply chain and logistics has. I worked at IPL for 3 years, but I got to the point where I was ready for a new challenge. There was not a role for me to progress into, so I started looking outside of the company for my new challenge.

It took me 12 months, many interviews and a few offers before I accepted a role at XPO. The role not only needed to be the correct salary/package but needed to be in the right location, be the challenge I was looking for with clear progression opportunities. When the role at XPO was pitched to me by a recruitment agent I felt that it was too senior for me, as I had not managed anyone before and would be responsible for a team of 6. After going for the interview and meeting the



finance director and site manager I got a great view of the culture of the business and what they were looking for. It was then I realised that I was capable of doing the role. It's been over a year now and I can honestly say it's the best decision I made. I love my role and the challenges that it brings every day. I am a member of the site leadership team which means I am involved with H&S, HR and Operational matters just to name a few, on top of my finance duties which means every day is different. If you asked me at school what industry do you think you will be working in, I know I wouldn't have said logistics as it's not something that you are aware of at school, however I believe it will be where I progress in my career.