

Digital Futures - Alex

Two young men joined the Digital Futures Workshops in April 2025, the pilot of the Digital Natives programme. After being involved in the workshops, the young men gained work experience placements with a local tech company and completed the Level 2 ILM Qualification in Leadership and Team Skills.

“I chose to do the workshops because I didn’t have much on and felt like I had some free time, and just thought ‘why not just do it and see what I can get from it’. I felt like I might as well do it and give it a try, see if I can learn some new skills. I didn’t really have a lot of expectations going in, except that maybe I thought it would be more formal like a classroom with a teacher and you’re just taking notes.

When I started it, I really enjoyed it. I liked that there was a range of ages and it not being too formal definitely made me enjoy it more. It was good that it kind of differentiated from school, in a different setting and it was much more interactive as well. It was just a nice atmosphere where everyone felt included. Sometimes at school it’s kind of like teachers are just teaching and not everyone is involved, but everyone genuinely looked happy and like they were having a good time. It was nice that we were all similar ages, that made it really fun.

When we got started, I liked being introduced to the editing software. I’ve always liked editing videos, but I was introduced to this software where I can do more and was taught how to use it from the start. I still use it sometimes at home, and just practice with videos online, but I really liked it and thought it was helpful. I also learnt lots of other kinds of small skills, like the computer shortcuts I found really helpful, and I use them in school sometimes now. I really liked using the VR, I knew of it but had never actually used it. It was just really fun. Sam had come to our school and showed it to us and then yeah, I thought I might actually like this and want to see what it’s like. It was the same with AI, I felt like I knew of it and knew a fair bit, but it was helpful for Sam to show it to us in different ways and help make sense of it with what I knew already.

For the trip to Ebbon Group, I immediately just got this sense of belonging, and they welcomed us totally when we got there. Everyone was just really kind and respectful, and you could tell they actually wanted to speak to us and do the activities with us. It wasn’t this thing where you’re bothering them, they were actually willing and wanted to do it, and I really liked that about them. Sometimes at career fairs and things, you can just tell with people’s body language that they kind of didn’t want to do this, but had to. So when I got to Ebbon group it was just different straight away. They looked like they wanted to talk to us, and I could really tell they wanted to do their jobs, and it made me want to know more. And at the time, we kept being told from school we need to find work experience, and I just thought “I kind of like this place, there’s no harm in asking”. Craig and Rob seemed really happy that we asked, and seemed genuinely excited, and we organised the work experience from there.

Craig, Nigel and Jenny were great. They were so down to earth and they really enjoyed us being there and I really liked that. They were so relatable and genuinely included us in everything. We were shown all different parts of the business, and actually got an insight into what they do, and sat in on meetings and got to ask questions. The whole week was really interactive. It just felt like everyone liked us being there, and it really changed my view on work experience. Before that, I just thought it's a business world and everyone just has their heads down and gets on with stuff, but yeah they really included us. It was really enjoyable. We worked in different sections of their business throughout the week, like accounting, tech, and product design. I really liked seeing the accounting. I'm interested in being an investment banker and they talked me through what they do, they showed me the books and Craig showed me this website you can use to find out how companies are doing financially. I really liked that, and it was cool to find the bits I liked and the bits I wasn't so interested in, like the IT infrastructure. But it was cool to see how it all fits together in a company like that.

I think the highlight for me was seeing them as like one big family. They seemed to show up for each other and showed me that if you're going to work somewhere, you're going to spend most of your time with the people there, so you have to like the company and the people, and really just see each other as humans.

You would just have these really human moments together and there would be a bunch of laughter, and yeah, it really taught me that if you're going to work somewhere you have to enjoy it, and enjoy the people around you, and not just work because you have to.

It made me want to come back and take part in the workshops again. I didn't want to just spend the week at home in books revising, and felt like it would be a good week again, and there hasn't been anything I don't like. I also did the Young Leaders qualification and residential. I like being a leader and thought to myself, if I'm going, I'm going to get different skills and I really liked it. I learnt what can be a good leader and how you make more people feel included when you are leading, and I came away with different skills and different aspects of leadership and how it actually works in practice. I think most people see leadership as like when there's a boss and there's workers working for the boss. But the boss can be part of it too and everyone can feel equal. It kind of linked to Ebbon Group as well, with Craig and Rob being the CEO's, everyone still interacted together and they're all connected. They all had that friendship, it was normal rather than this hierarchy. It's taught me that as a leader, people don't have to be afraid or exclude young people, you can still be on the same level and treat people equally and fairly.

It's really stayed with me, knowing what makes a good leader and a bad leader. Seeing how Sam included everyone, and the environment at Ebbon Group, it's taught me about patience and that where you work really matters. I'm thinking about A Levels and Apprenticeships now, something in finance or around economics and business, or maybe University. It'd love to get an apprenticeship at a firm and then get a job from that."

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