

## NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK

Kelvin Hughes recognises the importance of apprenticeships within the workplace, and has run its own successful apprenticeship scheme, the Kelvin Hughes Apprenticeship and Training Academy, for the past three years. This interview with a Kelvin Hughes apprentice has been carried out in support of National Apprenticeship Week 2017 - taking place from 6 to 10 March.

National Apprenticeship Week is co-ordinated by the National Apprenticeship Service. It is designed to raise awareness of the

value that apprenticeships and traineeships can bring to both individuals and companies alike, and to celebrate the positive impact they have on the wider economy. By raising awareness in this way, it is hoped that even more people will apply for apprenticeships and the opportunity to learn in a real workplace setting and enjoy a fast track to a great career.

The Kelvin Hughes Apprenticeship and Training Academy website can be found at:

[www.kelvinhughes.com/about/careers/apprenticeships](http://www.kelvinhughes.com/about/careers/apprenticeships)

### AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTIAN ZISSIMOU

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**Q. How did you find out about apprenticeships with Kelvin Hughes?**

**A.** About two and a half years ago, I had a meeting with a recruitment agent who told me about Kelvin Hughes and said they were a very good company to work for and that they had vacancies for apprenticeships. So, I decided to take the opportunity that was offered to visit the Kelvin Hughes site.

I was interested in social media and how it can work to attract customers although I didn't really have that much knowledge in the area. I had a couple of interviews and a tour of the company and when I discovered that a marketing apprenticeship was available, I was determined to go for it. I applied for the position and, after another two interviews, I was offered the position.

**Q. What was the particular attraction of an apprenticeship for you?**

**A.** I chose to do an apprenticeship scheme as opposed to going to university because I was keen to learn and start working at the same time. I felt that gaining practical experience in a company would suit me better as it would give me a real grounding for my future career. You need to have that

real-life experience whatever you end up doing and I thought it would be good to start early.

**Q. Tell me something about what your apprenticeship involved.**

**A.** Well, it lasted for two years and I think the biggest challenge for me was learning to understand what they do. I had no real knowledge of radar before I joined Kelvin Hughes but I was given all the support and encouragement I needed to get me to the point where I could start helping to promote their radar-based products.

Kelvin Hughes takes part in about 35 to 40 exhibitions around the world every year and I was involved in organising and running a number of them. There's a lot of work involved. It takes at least two months to plan for these events, some times longer than that. So, it's a time-consuming process. But the great thing is that I was given the opportunity to go along to some of the exhibitions I was involved in managing, including one in Poland. It was my first foreign business trip!

Going to exhibitions has been a fascinating experience. I've had a chance to see some of the really amazing technology that is out there.



Christian Zissimou,  
Apprentice at Kelvin Hughes



I've also been involved in creating and maintaining internal databases for both military and commercial equipment, shipping products all over the world.

**Q. How do you think your apprenticeship will benefit your career?**

**A.** I feel that my apprenticeship has taught me how Kelvin Hughes works and about the wider industry as well. I'm developing an understanding of how companies operate and how different departments work together. I'm sure that will prove to be very useful to me wherever the future takes me.

Another very important thing is communication skills. In the past, I found it quite hard to speak to people and hold conversations. But my apprenticeship experience has really helped me to overcome that. At the same time, I've learned how to do things without having to ask for too much help.

**Q. What would you say you enjoyed most about your apprenticeship?**

**A.** I'm tempted to say the free food. But seriously, Kelvin Hughes itself is so interesting. I get to work with all this extraordinary equipment that I used to play with on my computer games at home. Now I see it in front of me every

day. Also, I have to mention the people I work with who are very open and have made me feel very welcome.

**Q. So, now you've finished your apprenticeship, what happens next?**

**A.** Well, I'm expecting to receive a contract which, when I sign it, will put me on the Kelvin Hughes payroll in a permanent role. To start with, I'll essentially be in the same role as now but with some additional responsibilities and I'll have the title of Marketing Assistant.

It's going to be exciting. My apprenticeship years were a very important learning opportunity for me, even though I was doing a lot of useful work as well. It's going to be interesting to see how things change. To be honest, I'm not totally sure myself what to expect!

**Q. What advice would you have for young people who might be considering an apprenticeship?**

**A.** I'd say 'go for it'. I wish I could show a picture of what I was like two years ago, compared to the kind of person I am now. It helps you to grow as an individual, being in a working environment every day. It's a really good start to a career and it definitely helps you gain lots of solid experience.

Funnily enough, one of my friends has just joined Kelvin Hughes and is now on the same apprenticeship scheme as I was.

I think one of the reasons why people choose to do apprenticeships is that university is quite expensive now and most young people don't want to have that kind of debt when they come out of it. It's quite a risk. Also, students who are more practical are probably drawn towards apprenticeships rather than a more academic route, although that might suit some other young people better.

The range of opportunities available to the younger generation is more widely understood now. Apprenticeships are a big talking point. More people know about apprenticeships and think about them as an option. Social media and the internet have definitely helped raise awareness.

