

Nicole Vogel, Certificate III in Agriculture



I'm Nicole (middle in the picture above). I finished year twelve in 2013 without knowing exactly what I wanted to do the following year, nor having had experience in any formal job. It was a rather stressful experience as I considered how close the new year was and how unprepared I felt for the big wide world. However, it's not a necessity to know exactly what you want to do for the rest of your life, nor even in the following week, as opportunities change all the time, sometimes even for the better.

In my case, I found it advantageous simply knowing what I enjoyed and having a general idea of where I'd like to be in my future. That is, I always wanted to travel the world and as I didn't have the immediate financial capacity for that I considered how I may find a job that one day in my future would present that opportunity. Secondly, I loved biology at school and have been brought up on a beef and sheep farm, which grew a passion for agriculture in me.

Fortunately for me, the spectrum of jobs in agriculture is very broad so international business and agriculture have crossovers. Despite knowing this I was still stuck knowing exactly how to get there. I found a uni course that felt perfect for my ideal future, however, as it can only be studied in Melbourne I needed to take a gap year that would enable me to afford accommodation.

In order to fill in a whole year, what could I do that would be relevant to where I wanted to go?

At this point my dad, whose work is also related to agriculture, arrived home with a package from Kestrel Apprentice Solutions that have an office near his. I didn't understand what their role was, what a traineeship was, nor confusing acronyms such as GTO and RTO.

However, dad had booked a meeting that I was to have with a Kestrel Consultant. Sceptically, I arrived in appropriate dress and we discussed where I wanted to be in my future. I was still not sure at this point if I even wanted to continue with my plans in agriculture, however I discussed working in a place such as Elders, Landmark or Murray Goulburn and obtaining a Certificate III in Agriculture under a traineeship.

After this initial meeting at Kestrel Apprentice Solutions, I was invited to have an interview with them so that they could draw up a reference for me, as it became apparent that they were happy to employ me. This took me a while to understand.

As best as I can explain it works like this: Kestrel Apprentice Solutions is a Group Training Organisation (GTO). A GTO is one way of undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship, the other way is being directly employed by a business or organisation. A GTO employs apprentices and trainees under the relevant training contract. Thus a GTO becomes your legal employer.

Kestrel is therefore my legal employer, however I am usually only to meet with them at quarterly performance reviews, my main contact with them is faxing my timesheet so that they will pay me my regular wage. A GTO places their trainees or apprentices with host employers. The host employer is the business or organisation where you undertake your traineeship or apprenticeship and who provide supervision and guidance as you work on the job.

After Christmas break my Kestrel Consultant brought me news that Murray Goulburn Trading store in Corryong was looking for a new employee. This was also advertised in the paper, however they required fewer working hours than a full time trainee needs. Kestrel's reference for me had been forwarded to Corryong via emails through Murray Goulburn's head office in Melbourne and apparently through a number of other stores as well. The efficiency of communication was incredible and I'm lead to believe that it is an advantage of being employed by a GTO.

Corryong is conveniently located close to my family farm where I am able to live for the year. Furthermore, through Kestrel I am not restricted to one host employer. That means that despite Murray Goulburn Trading (MGT) not being able to provide my full time hours, I am able to complete the hours with another business. In this case my second host employer is LC, WL & GK Vogel, otherwise known as the farm which my parents and grandfather own.

I find that being hosted by my family's business rather than working directly for them is beneficial in many ways, especially because it ensures that I have regular, formal pay and other legal requirements are met to a professional standard. This carries advantages for my family as well. I would, from my own experience, recommend anyone who is considering working for their family business to do so through a GTO.

I completed my job interview with MGT Corryong and was accepted within the week; I should mention that the wage of a trainee may seem low to you, but don't forget it seems low to a potential employer as well, and that is a not a bad thing at all! On that note, trainees have payed leave and holidays, so all in all a trainee's wages work out well. Before my job began I still had to meet with my Kestrel Consultant. My consultant works personally with me, acts as a first point of contact between myself, my host employers and Kestrel Apprentice

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Soil Sample Testing

Solutions, monitors performance and progress, and ensures all OH&S procedures are taken care of among other things. A mandatory part of my training contract is to attend off the job training for my Certificate III in Agriculture. I'm paid to attend a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) for this training. An RTO is a training organisation selected to carry out your trade or vocational training to complete your qualification.

My RTO is Wodonga TAFE, I am expected to complete a chemical course during my work hours over a couple of

days. This will help me to obtain part of my Certificate III in Agriculture. Because most trainees completing the Cert III in Agriculture live in the country, travelling to their nearest RTO for every elective would be inconvenient. Instead, a TAFE representative visits us on the job to assist us with our coursework.

I really enjoy my job here in the country. I work in such an incredibly friendly environment, unlike anything I had expected. My initial skepticism over taking a gap year has dissipated. I think its really important to work hard to obtain your goals. So at first it may seem that a gap year working in a trading store seems meagre compared to working internationally, but I'm putting in all my effort to make it a worth while stepping stone which I believe it has become. It's also important to create contacts with everyone you meet; I have discussed my goals informally with my boss's boss and even MG personnel from Melbourne with positive results. In my job I have had the opportunity to work on the road with an MG agronomist taking soil samples on local properties, canvassing with a sales representative and learning to drive a forklift. I consider these opportunities highlights because all are steep learning curves for me.

Working at the register, at the fuel bowser, on the floor advising the whereabouts of certain items, displaying products, addressing every customer as a valuable individual are all daily activities that may seem simple but over a short period of time have already granted me unexpected results in my growth as a person, including, but not limited to, my confidence with other people and my feeling of self worth.

In my particular trade, my physical health has improved by being on my feet often, moving heavy objects, digging trenches and working with animals and, lets be honest, my stunted internet availability here forces me to sleep for a healthy amount of time rather than stay up. I have been stressed by the steep transition from being in the city to living in the country full time, school to a job, short hours to long hours, knowing everyone to knowing no one, getting on top of managing cars, phones, insurance, money, medical, ID and other matters all related to becoming independent.

However, everything has and will slowly fall in to place, and I believe I will able to step confidently into the future after completing my traineeship in agriculture.

