

Paying it forward

An employee's story:
Phillip Elia



"I got involved with CadetMax after leaving school. I had no idea what I wanted to do and didn't have enough credits to go on to university. I was doing nothing and I didn't think I had many options on the job front because I hadn't gone to University. CadetMax gave me so much encouragement and a confidence boost to get me back on my feet. They showed me that there were still lots of opportunities for me.

I actually missed out on my first interview which got me down a bit but I went straight back into the CadetMax offices and they didn't dwell on it at all. They pushed me on to another interview within 2 days so I didn't have time to get down about missing out. That was the job with Converga, I got it and went to work at their site at Westpac in town!

I looked after delivery logistics at Westpac. We took care of everything from the mail house through to shifting huge signs around the banks. I was with Converga for 16 months until January 2013.

I left because I had the chance to study Theology and so I kept in touch with my CadetMax mentor Matt who was really supportive of me taking on this chance to study too. I always knew I wanted to work in the community and I had considered the police but didn't want to be away from my family for the training.

I feel lucky to have found my current role after I got involved with a boxing group which was run by a guy who used the gym as a way of mentoring at risk youth through the organisation PACT.

I volunteered for a while around my study and then they invited me to apply for a part time job as a youth worker in schools. I got the job about 6 months ago now and I work in Intermediate Schools mostly.

PACT focuses on kids who are having troubles at school and may also be having troubles at home. PACT gives the kids a big brother or a friend who they can learn good behaviour from.

I contacted CadetMax after I did some work for PACT in a high school and had met a whole lot of students who were heading in the same direction I had been, before I went through CadetMax. They were doing nothing, dropping out of school, they had no idea what they could do or wanted to do and there was no motivation.

It was great to see everyone at CadetMax again. They have put me on to the Career Start programme in Glenn Innes which will be a great opportunity for our PACT students.

CadetMax gave me options and the belief that I could do something even though I hadn't gone to University. I want these young people I now work with to have the same opportunity to go through what I did with CadetMax. I know it can help change their lives too." ■

Interview with Phillip Elia conducted by Rebecca Hendl-Smith, Communications Executive, Auckland Chamber of Commerce - August 2014.

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CadetMax is a youth employment programme for 18-24 year olds, in receipt of a benefit and living in South Auckland. For more information contact: **0800 709 907** or cadetmax@chamber.co.nz

CadetMax is a partnership between the Ministry of Social Development and Auckland Chamber of Commerce.