

APPRENTICE STORY

PRESTON

EKS&H

FINANCIAL SERVICES



ACCOUNTANT

“MIXING HIGH SCHOOL AND MEANINGFUL WORK EXPERIENCE FILLS A GAP. THERE IS MORE VALUE IN WHAT I AM DOING, AND I’M GETTING SKILLS THAT APPLY TO THE REAL WORLD.”



Like many teenagers, Preston spends a lot of time wondering what he will do with his life. But perhaps unlike his peers, he is laying down plans for his future. Preston is a good student, but does get bored easily with repetitive tasks and has difficulty finding meaning in school. Since he joined CareerWise’s modern youth-apprenticeship program in 2017, Preston feels he is finally spending his time on something worthwhile, and is fine-tuning his vision of what lies ahead.

THE STUDENT WHO “DOESN’T MIND” SCHOOL

A junior at Cherokee Trail High School in Aurora, Preston doesn’t mind school. He even believes that learning how to work with other students is a good skill everyone should have. But he doesn’t enjoy the redundancy of school or the lack of maturity of many students his age.

When Preston heard about CareerWise’s apprenticeship program during a marketing class, he went to a meeting to learn more—and signed up.

EKS&H, a professional services firm, hired Preston to be an apprentice in the consulting department’s accounting solutions group. His job is to run client reports, evaluate and update client assets, and develop asset valuation. While he hasn’t decided yet if accounting is a field he’ll enter as a career—he recognized that his decision to become an apprentice is the first choice of many that will open doors for him in many different career paths—he views the experience as valuable and says he “loves it.”

“I’m developing good knowledge in general. I can use it personally, and accounting is a good fallback for whatever I decide to try,” he said.

FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Preston considers himself a planner and goal-oriented, and apprenticeship fit well with his own approach to mapping out his future. He had planned to serve a two-year mission for the Church of Latter Day Saints directly after high school. But further reflecting on what he wanted to do, he came up with the idea of writing out a five-year plan to broaden his goals: he settled on a three-year apprenticeship first, followed by the mission.

He does have his eye on college eventually—he'll likely pursue a degree in finance accounting at Brigham Young University—but the notion is currently vague in his mind. For now, the five-year plan is set. "That's as far as I've thought about. I want to gain experience first and have the ability to have a head-start on a career after college."

MAINTAINING VISION AND FOCUS

Preston applied for apprenticeships within CareerWise's financial services and business management career paths at 16 companies. He was granted several interviews, and when EKS&H offered him a job, it was the best option because of the certificate in business accounting he'll receive after three years.

He also looked forward to the chance to get some variety in his day—a contrast to his school day where there is little diversity. "I excel in my classes, but struggle when I get bored studying the same thing over and over again. I lose my ability to focus and buckle down."

This year, Preston is taking four core classes at school: English, math, science and social studies. Because his school operates on a block system, his schedule varies week to week, and he also goes to seminary every morning. He appreciates the amount of coordination between CareerWise, his employer and the school district to ensure he meets all of his class requirements.

As a senior, Preston will take accounting courses at school, and he feels his experience at EKS&H will positively contribute to that. "It will be a lot easier. It will come more naturally after working here for a while."

REAL-WORLD SKILLS

A year into the apprenticeship, Preston is seeing improvements in his efficiencies, developing professional relationships and receiving valuable training.

He is also significantly improving his communication skills—especially, he says, "compared to other kids my age." For example, because of the regular contact he must make with his teammates at work, he is now more comfortable asking questions, voicing concerns and checking with others to ensure his work is correct.

All in all, Preston's experience makes him more well-rounded and more satisfied. "Mixing high school and meaningful work experience fills a gap. There is more value in what I am doing, and I'm getting skills that apply to the real world."

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