

EIT PRE-EMPLOYMENT COURSE

NAMES: JAMES STAPLEY AND CHRIS FONTAINE

Rather than go straight into an apprenticeship, many people choose to do a pre-trade course first. These pre-trade courses, which are offered at training providers around the country, cover a lot of the theory which counts towards an apprenticeship, as well as some practical workplace skills. But what are they like? We caught up with James Stapley and Chris Fontaine on the pre-trade course at EIT in Napier and got them to explain.

You're four months into your eight month pre-employment course – how are you finding it?

Chris: We're learning heaps! It's been great for teaching me the basics and giving me an overview of what's out there. I really like the hands-on practical aspects of the course. I've realised that you've got to put some work into it and keep up with the class. A lot of the guys come in expecting it to be the same as school, but it's not. You have to be serious about what you're doing if you want to make a career out of this.

James: The course gives you a really good insight into what an apprenticeship's all about. It's really cool when you've got a practical problem and you figure it out by yourself.

What does the course involve?

James: The theory side takes up the majority of the course, you're basically covering the first two years of the theory you'd do in an electrotechnology apprenticeship – but in one year. Some of the theory's a bit tricky – things like maths, concepts and formulas, but once you figure it out it's great. We also learn a lot of practical stuff too, like wiring up lights and light sockets and motors.

Chris: We have three seven-hour days a week, and one half-day. I also put in one hour's study time at home for every couple of hours in class to stay on top of everything.

How do you find the tutors?

Chris: Our tutors have a real wealth of knowledge. I find them helpful and they create a relaxed atmosphere that makes it easy to learn. They're dedicated to what they do, so if you make the effort they'll go the extra yards for you.



James Stapley and Chris Fontaine with EIT Programme Coordinator Adrian Rhodes [middle]



Do you have any advice for someone considering a pre-employment course?

James: Make sure you get stuck-in right from the start. The work isn't hard if you keep up with it. You also need to make sure that you get the most out of your tutors by getting them to explain anything you're finding hard, and asking for extra help if you need it.

Why do you think the pre-employment course is a good introduction to an apprenticeship?

Chris: It's a great way of figuring out if an electrotechnology apprenticeship is what you want to do. It also means that when I'm approaching employers to take me on as an apprentice, I can show them that I've already completed the first two years of theory and that I have a lot of the basic practical skills that many other new apprentices won't already have.