

MEET THE MANAGEMENT APPRENTICES

MAX MAY

Director and CEO, Rural Arts
SLMDA Apprentice



WHO ARE RURAL ARTS?

Rural Arts is a charity, delivering inspiring and inclusive creative opportunities to enrich and connect communities across North Yorkshire.

Max started his career with Rural Arts, first as a volunteer, then becoming CEO in just 5 years. Max took on the SLMDA after being approached by the local council's apprenticeship team, which enabled him to work and learn at the same time.

“It was such a brilliant opportunity, and was the first time I had really thought about an apprenticeship as something you could pursue at any stage in your career – rather than when you're just starting out.”

“I've just finished the first of 4 modules on the SLMDA. It provides masters-level training that allows me to work and study at the same time, and most importantly, to apply my learning from day one. Flexibility of training is important at any stage, but particularly during COVID where people may understandably be reluctant to leave the labour market to pursue further training.”

I took over as CEO from our founder who had led the organisation for almost 30 years. This was an incredibly significant change project which was very challenging at times. Thanks to the SLMDA, I've been able to reflect on that change process and identify why some of the things I tried to do were less successful and why we faced resistance, perhaps – for example – because I might not have been gaining enough staff support, or not established a sense of urgency for the change.”

ADAPTING FOR THE FUTURE

“We've just been leading some recruitment, and decided to make some pretty fundamental changes to our processes.

It was really important for me that everyone taking part in the process was going to be able to bring their best selves to the table.

We sought to recognise some of the systemic barriers that stand in the way for new entrants to the workforce, particularly for those who face additional barriers. We thought about how we can make the process more inclusive and accessible.

This new process removed educational requirements and interview questions were sent in advance, enabling us to attract candidates that have gained skills and experience in a voluntary role or more personal capacity. For this role in particular, success wasn't going to be measured by how quickly you interpreted a question or worked out what I wanted to hear.

The successful candidate was someone without traditional experience in the field and is now bringing a more diverse knowledge and mindset to the organisation.”

“The skills I've gained have been essential to making that happen effectively and efficiently. It has also helped me think synoptically, inspiring North Yorkshire Together, a strategic, cross-county COVID-response programme in partnership with fellow charities North Yorkshire Sport and North Yorkshire Youth.”

ON LEADING HIS TEAM

“I would love one of my staff to start an apprenticeship, to role-model the example of learning at work, whether that be in marketing or creative facilitation etc. Given how rocky I think we can expect 2021 to be, my ambition is of course to retain all staff and services to the public, but also to continue to fundraise and create innovative projects that will enable us to thrive, not just survive. I know the skills from my SLMDA will enable me to do that.”

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