

THE INSIDER

NEW
SERIES

AN INSIDER VIEW FROM INTERVIEW TO END OF SEASON

New year, new job. And hopefully this year sees more of a return to 'normal' for both myself and Outdoor Activity centres in general. COVID-19 was crippling for many staff and centres and has resulted in staff cuts and an industry drain. It's been a difficult and frustrating few years with very limited work opportunities for me, so like many others I've had to turn to other things such as labouring and state benefits to make ends meet.

That's the background and context as I'm about to start a role as a manager of a centre that's new to me. Although I've never worked for this company before, I have over 20 years of industry experience and was due to take up an Assistant Manager's role with them in March 2020...until Covid struck!

Over the years I've worked for several companies who have vastly different levels professionalism, including one where there were flags as early as my telephone interview which, was far too brief and vague. That was a steep learning curve – if they didn't care to ensure the right staff were in senior positions, what else did they not take care of? A lot as it happens!

This new role has already started better – there have been some long phone calls and many emails to relay information and answer questions which is not just necessary, but both settling and reassuring.

Before I arrive on centre I have been tasked with having an in-depth knowledge of the staff handbook, which is another good sign – at one of my past companies I didn't even see a copy of the staff handbook until several weeks into the season!

It's hard to know the challenges I will face this season apart from learning the ins and outs of how this particular company operates.

My main concern as the start date draws closer is whether we'll be fully staffed, especially considering the background and context of industry shortages. But until we get on site, that's an issue for someone else to deal with.

Everything else will have to be dealt with as it arises. A friend of mine once compared being a manager to doing yoga, i.e. being comfortable in uncomfortable positions, because you constantly have to deal with challenging people and situations, and be okay with that. So it's not really something I can prepare for.

My preparations now basically involve getting my kit packed so I'm ready for the season and the Welsh weather. And this is getting me excited to get back doing what I'm trained for and love to do ■

AUTHOR

Calvin Healey, Centre Manager

Calvin has over 20 years of experience in the Outdoors industry and has had senior roles in the UK, France and Australia. This year he has started as a Centre Manager in Brecon (South Wales), for a company he's not worked for before – Acorn Adventure.

