

ELBA

# A Day in the life of...



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## MY ALARM GOES OFF...

My alarm goes off at “awful o’clock”... 5.50am. I have to get to the office by around 6.40am every day, so it’s an early start. I grab a quick shower and get dressed (chinos and a shirt, or a suit and tie if I’m seeing clients that day), say goodbye to my wife and dog, and then walk to Deptford Bridge DLR station to catch a train to Canary Wharf.

## I’M RESPONSIBLE FOR...

I trade interest rate and debt derivatives on behalf of my clients (hedge funds and pension funds). I also try to provide them with insight into the financial markets and recommend trades that may help them to achieve their investment goals. Another important part of my job is to mentor and train the more junior members of our team, both here in London and in New York.

## I GOT MY JOB...

I studied Accounting at Queen’s University Belfast, but to be honest I really didn’t enjoy the

subject. As part of my course, I had taken some Economics and Financial Markets modules and found them much more interesting than the core accounting work. An opportunity arose towards the end of my 2nd year of uni, to apply for a year-long internship with Lehman Brothers in London, which I jumped at. That was my first taste of working in an investment bank and I knew that that was the career I wanted to pursue.

I was lucky enough to be offered a place on their graduate scheme for after I finished my degree in 2009... I was unlucky enough to see that opportunity disappear when Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy on 15th September 2008 (10 days after I’d finished my internship!). I spent my final year at Queen’s applying for internships with other investment banks and was accepted onto Credit Suisse’s summer internship program. That went

well and I secured a place on their graduate scheme in 2010.

## AT SCHOOL I STUDIED...

I studied Maths, Economics, Business Studies and Physics... the first 3 because I was interested in those subjects, and Physics because the school timetable wouldn’t allow me to choose Music or Irish Language!

## MY TYPICAL DAY...

I sit down in front of 4 extra wide computer screens at 6.40am, and catch up on the news from overnight and what’s happened in the markets while I’ve been asleep. Then I browse lots of charts and graphs to look for something interesting to speak to my clients about or for trading opportunities to pitch to them. The rest of my day doesn’t follow a set structure as it really depends on what’s going



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Trader

on in the markets, the news and how actively my clients want to trade them. However, most of my time is taken up by executing trades and chatting with hedge funds and pension funds. Some days are really intense and busy, some are quiet and boring. The actual trading is very different from the “men shouting at each other in a trading pit” image that many people hold. It’s nearly all done electronically – point and click. When things are quieter, I speak to my colleagues on my team and on other trading desks to hear their insights and bounce ideas off each other, or just to chat about our families, football, holidays etc.

It’s a long day that finishes up any time between 4.30 and 6pm, with only a short break to go get lunch, which we eat at our desks... no lunch hour on the trading floor! There’s a canteen in the building, but I usually head outside to buy my lunch and take the opportunity to stretch my legs and get some fresh air. As I work in sales, I sometimes go to meet clients for dinner or a few drinks after work. It really helps with developing the relationship and trust between us.

## THE KEY SKILLS I USE IN MY JOB...

The key skills for the sales aspect of my job are being personable,

listening to my client’s needs and being extremely clear and concise in my communication skills. The key skills required for trading are diligence and care, and remaining calm under pressure. They’re definitely skills that you hone on the job, and I learned a lot from my more senior colleagues in the first few years of my career.

But I honestly think that the best training I ever received for trading a volatile market was working behind a bar in a busy pub in Ireland during ‘Happy Hour’! Dealing with multiple people shouting instructions at you, whilst managing their expectations, and getting their orders right... There are a lot of similarities there.

## THE BEST PART OF MY JOB IS...

I love how my day is affected by what is going on in the world on a minute to minute basis. I love that a headline that flashes up on screen on Bloomberg (finance software) or Sky News can completely change the dynamic of the rest of my day, even if it can cause additional stress. It’s exciting and challenging, as well as hugely satisfying.

## THE WORST PART OF MY JOB IS...

It used to be the early starts, but I’ve got used to those now. I think the toughest part of my job is dealing with difficult clients. Most of my clients are wonderful people who I love to speak to and trade for, but occasionally you encounter someone who is a bit obtuse, or having a bad day that they want to take out on you. It’s a challenge to deal with that situation whilst maintaining a potentially important relationship. The key to handling it is to listen to their concerns and

try to help without compromising your values. Usually there’s a solution that works for everyone.

## MY ROLE MODEL GROWING UP WAS...

Completely unrelated to my career but as a lifelong Liverpool fan my role model was Steven Gerrard...! Incredible leader... always lead by example. I was also lucky enough to have three extremely driven and hardworking older brothers who set an example for me to follow.

## AFTER WORK...

After work I love to do some form of exercise – every night I either play 5-a-side football, go for a run or go to the gym. It’s a great way to shake off any tension from the day and clear your head. Typically then it’s dinner with my wife, walking the dog, and finally a pot of tea while we watch whatever box set we’re working through at the time. Bed-time is 10.30pm... not very rock’n’roll. Occasionally we’ll be a bit more exciting and go out for drinks or head to a gig of course.



## MY PLAN B...

Unfortunately, I doubt Liverpool would give me run-out in Full Back, so plan c would be to teach. Training our juniors is one of the most rewarding parts of this job. I could see myself enjoying working in education full time.

