

A chance labouring job changed Alex Patten's life. Now his career prospects are on the firmest of foundations after being named 2014 Apprentice of the Year for infrastructure giant, Downer.

Alex left North Shore's Rangitoto College still unsure of what direction he wanted to take. After completing a Certificate in Computing and IT at Unitec, and contemplating further study for a role in the IT industry, Alex signed on with a labour hire company.

He found himself working for a week on a Downer Major Projects site, and he was clearly doing all the right things. "Downer offered me a chance to join their Apprentice programme," Alex says.



"As part of my apprenticeship in Civil Plant Operation, the company connected me to Connexis, New Zealand's infrastructure ITO. I've just completed my second qualification with them and I'm looking at the next steps now."

Alex's story highlights the role industry training organisations (ITOs) can play in the development of someone's career. Through Connexis, Alex has completed a Level 2 Certificate in Infrastructure Works and Level 3 Certificate in Civil Plant Operation.

There aren't many large machines on site that Alex can't manage, and his next options are now looking rock solid. With Downer's infrastructure services spread across the transport, water, energy, telecommunication and facility management sectors, and a workforce of over 4,500 people, it is likely that Alex will find plenty of these options close to home.

Alex enjoys working outside, and appreciates the variety that comes with working on different projects across different sites and the fact that no two days are the same.

He is not only planning to stay with Downer, he is going to keep on gaining qualifications and learning on the job, as much as he can. Alex says, "From here, I think I will either start to study papers towards a Diploma in Civil Engineering, or to look at the Infrastructure Works Supervision papers provided through Connexis."

With an Apprenticeship in an in-demand industry and now the 2014 Downer Major Projects Apprentice of the Year ... Alex's career path and prospects have certainly come a long way from that week of labouring two years ago.

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