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# Engineering an *outstanding career*

English Language Partners' course helped Elena Nenasheva find the confidence to believe in her own abilities. James Fyfe | Photos Julie Zhu

**W**hen Elena Nenasheva moved to Auckland last year to find work as an engineer, she faced the challenge of rebuilding her career from scratch in a foreign country.

Not only that, the self-described introvert also faced the daunting prospect of sitting through job interviews in a second language.

But by overcoming her natural shyness and tackling these challenges head on, she is now on the road to success.

From the time Elena arrived in New Zealand with her partner five years ago, she knew she would need to improve her English skills.

Although she had studied a little of the language in Russia, she was far from fluent and quickly got to work self-studying.

Despite her efforts, she soon realised that learning another language was harder than she expected.

"Before you start learning, you never realise how hard it can be," she says. "You think, 'I'll just come to that country and I'll be surrounded by people who speak English and I'll improve very quickly'. But it's not the case."

Determined to continue her career as an engineer, Elena eventually enrolled in a postgraduate course at the University of Canterbury, where she hoped to get up to speed with local engineering practices and have a chance to hone her language skills. ▶





**Work Talk** is an intensive four-week course.

**"It was definitely a boost to my confidence."**

*– Elena Nenasheva, Ramsetreid*

▶ Although her English did improve, she found she still wasn't as confident at speaking as she would have liked.

"At university, especially in engineering, you don't have the chance to speak to people much, because mostly it's math language."

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**She has quickly become a highly-regarded engineer in our business.**

*– Adam Dawson, Ramsetreid*

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After graduating and spending a few months at an internship in Christchurch, Elena and her partner decided to make the move to Auckland. It was there she was faced with the reality of having to find work in an unfamiliar city.

"When I came to Auckland, I didn't really have any connections."

Knowing that gaining confidence in job-hunting skills was crucial for getting work, Elena decided to enrol in English Language Partners' Work Talk course.

"I knew I had to go through interviews, and I was not really confident at that time, so I decided to attend this course."

Elena says she didn't just learn practical tips about job hunting and Kiwi work culture, the course also taught key skills for when it came time to interviews.

"By practising, knowing what questions would be asked and how to answer, it was definitely a boost on my confidence."

And practice certainly paid off. When she saw a promising job advertised at Ramsetreid, she decided to go for it.

"I thought, 'Oh, I'll use this opportunity anyway just to practise my skills in an interview, to use something that I learned'."

But the interview turned out to be more than just practice. After a process of three interviews, two via Skype and one face-to-face, she found she'd got the job.

"I was over the moon when they decided to hire me."

Elena's manager at Ramsetreid, Adam Dawson, is over the moon too, saying that since joining the company, she's become a much-valued member of his team.

Remembering their first encounter, he says that although Elena was nervous, "she came to the interview very well prepared" and there was never any doubt about her language ability.

"She has a natural tendency to seek clarity and asks questions when she is unsure, which has helped avoid miscommunication."

Adam says Elena also holds herself to a very high standard, a quality that shines through both in her work as an engineer and in her communication skills.

"As her career has progressed, Elena has been challenged with some complex projects involving technical conversations with very experienced stakeholders in the construction industry, and she has performed outstandingly.

"She has quickly become a highly-regarded engineer in our business, and her measured, thoughtful communication style is a contributor to this success."

Elena remains determined to develop her skills. She's not just focused on growing as an engineer, but is intent on perfecting her already near flawless English.

"I'm still improving, my level is not as good as I wish," she says.

"I probably need to start another course soon." 🌱

**Contact your closest centre about Work Talk**  
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