



Meat: Debbie Hardke

TRAINING COORDINATOR,
JBS AUSTRALIA PTY LIMITED
(QLD)

Debbie Hardke once had ambitions to be a teacher, but when she missed out on a university placement by two spots, she needed to consider other options. Career paths have a way of coming full circle however, and fast forward to the present day, Debbie is now a Training Coordinator and spends her days very happily teaching adults the skills they need to work in meat processing at JBS Australia Pty Limited.

“I love that as a training coordinator, no two days are the same. I have been offered so many new opportunities and have been able to complete several qualifications,” says Debbie.

“Each day brings with it new challenges and rewards. I really enjoy watching new starters progress in the business and helping them with training, to grow and develop into well-rounded meat industry workers.”

After Debbie missed out on her university placement, she decided her other career option was to get an entry level role in a company and work her way up. Debbie’s mother worked as a packer at the local meat processing plant in Beaudesert, Queensland, so Debbie started out there too. Up until the plant’s closure in 1996, she worked in roles including the Boning Room, Cold Stores, Offal Room and Administration.

Debbie took time off from her career to have children, later returning to the workforce at another plant, AMH Dinmore (JBS Australia).

As she and her husband were saving for a deposit on a house, she was able to initially share the parenting duties with him by working weekend shifts (Friday to Sunday), whilst he worked Monday to Thursday night shifts. Debbie says she was only able to do this as the hours offered by the red meat processing plant suited her family situation.

This co-parenting/work schedule meant that Debbie and her husband were able to spend time with their children and didn’t require any paid childcare for eight years; within three months they were able to save enough for a deposit on a block of land. They built their home, and moved into it four months later.

Debbie returned to red meat processing as a packer, but it was not long until she was asked to be a Workplace Training and Assessor – a new challenge she gladly accepted. This led to a position as Training Administrator, before moving into Human Resources. Debbie has now been in her current role of Training Coordinator for nine years.

“People will always continue to eat red meat, which means there will always be a demand for quality products,” says Debbie.

“If anyone is considering a new career, I’d recommend giving it a go. It’s as easy as logging onto the JBS Australia website and getting in contact with the address listed under the recruitment directory of your nearest plant.”

Debbie says it's great that JBS Australia offer training for so many different roles.

“Even if you were a former taxi driver but would like to work in meat processing, we can train you in manual handling deliveries, or even to use a knife for boning – whatever role is best suited for you.”

“If you are prepared to get your foot in the door and start in an entry level role,” says Debbie, “it may not be your first choice of job, but it shouldn’t take long for you to climb the corporate ladder. “

“Be honest with your supervisor and let them know your interests. There are also internal notice boards promoting current job vacancies, but if your supervisor knows you want to take on more responsibility, then the opportunities are there.”

As for Debbie’s future, she says she is very happy in her current role, but knows there are still numerous opportunities at JBS Australia.

The next time you eat red meat, have a think about the variety of people who helped it onto your plate.

It’s thanks to people in all sorts of roles – from boners and slicers, office administration or IT professionals to engineers, apprentices, microbiologists and HR Managers. It could even be the result of Debbie’s handiwork.

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