



Full name: *Dr. Andrea Day*

What subject did you study? *PhD in Behavioural Science*

Year of Graduation: *2012*

Current Job Title: *Senior Operational Analyst*

Current Employer/Organisation Name:
Ministry of Defence

How did you become interested in the area that you work in?

When I was researching group emotions for my PhD I started developing ideas on self-sacrifice. Why do some people give their lives and suffer horrific injuries for others? This led me to reading a lot about the military and one thing led to another and I was offered a visit to Headly Court (Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre). A visit led to a contracted placement there, and due to my experiences at Headly Court I have always had a keen interest in close combat and infantry, which is the area much of my work has been dedicated too.

How did you get to where you are today?

From Headly Court I formally joined the Ministry of Defence as a Numerical Scientist by responding to an advert in the "New Scientist". I worked for over four years on a variety of tasks and projects related to close combat and infantry which involved research into better equipment, medical procedures on the battlefield, mental and physical health. I was asked to consider joining the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) which I did almost two years ago and now work within the Close Combat and Analysis Team (CCAT).

What does your current role involve any skills and/or personal qualities needed?

My role predominately involves problem solving. I will have a Customer (Military or Civilian) who believes they have a problem, question or requirement. My first course of action is to define the what (problem, question, or requirement), then start planning the how (what has been done before, what is in scope of the research, what is out of scope, where is the risk, what resources are required, what are the timelines), then carry out the research and write it up in plain English! Brief the customer with the findings and answer any questions. In many ways, the same skills that are demonstrated in a good academic are what are needed for my role. I have found undertaking a PhD and utilising the transferrable skills invaluable. However, you also need to be able to work under considerable pressure with a fair amount of responsibility. Team work is essential and understanding delegation. Building and maintaining relationships and ensuring people have confidence in your decision making abilities are vital. Finally, being an effective communicator and having a good memory when you are put on the spot by someone senior is also beneficial!

What do you enjoy most about your role?

I enjoy working alongside the Military either in the field or in the office but with far more autonomy than is granted to Military serving personal. I enjoy travelling to destinations I would otherwise not have seen and meeting people whose lives are vastly different to mine. I get to play with new technology and equipment, conduct field trials and learn new scientific techniques and methods. My work is complex, challenging and vast. My work is always varied and requires flexibility and the ability to adapt to changing events quickly. When things are tough it's good to know that my team and I make a positive difference to the situation we are involved in.

Are there any things that are not so good?

The work can be stressful as the responsibility you are given and tight deadlines can add pressure. The salary is terrible and the work days can be very long!

Has anything surprised you about your role?

Nothing has surprised me about my role, though I am always surprised when asked by old University friends "well wouldn't you prefer to do something else?" The honest answer is no! No other job would give me the challenges and experiences this one has given me. When I want to sample a different area or try something else, I take the opportunity to move within a diverse organisation and try another area of Defence.

What key tips would you give to any students who might be considering entering a similar field today?

- *Check the eligibility criteria for working in the Ministry of Defence;*
- *Check the Civil Service job site;*
- *Why not try a University student placement opportunity with Dstl?*
- *When applying for a job, ask yourself do you meet and can you provide evidence of the job criteria asked for? Evidence does not need to be military experience, draw on your research experience, work experience and other transferrable skills;*
- *Before interview, ask yourself why do you want to work in Defence or the particular area of Defence you are applying for?*
- *Do you understand anything about UK Defence and Security policies?*
- *If unsuccessful, ask for feedback from the selection/interviewing panel.*