

# Veteran Profile

## Helen Birchall



**Name:** Helen Birchall

**Military Service:** 20 years

**Military Career:** Army, Royal Signals

**Joined Fujitsu:** 2021

**Fujitsu Career:** Business Development, Army and Deployed Operations

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### Military background

Coming from an all-girls independent school, a military career seemed an unlikely path for Helen Birchall. But having graduated from Leeds University with a Computer Science Degree she made a conscious decision to combine this technical knowledge with her passion for sports and physical pursuits. *“I joined the Officer Training Corps at University, and I loved the opportunity to play sport, tackle assault courses and I gained a good insight in army life,”* she recalls. Following this path, she joined the Royal Signals after officer training at Sandhurst, and subsequently experienced a successful and varied 20-year army career.

Throughout this time, Helen enjoyed a wide variety of roles and experiences including overseas deployments in Bosnia - at the height of the Balkans War and at the tender age of just 22 - Northern Ireland, two tours of Iraq and The Falklands. Her technical skills and knowledge were expanded and utilised to their full potential including the implementation of wide area communications networks, deploying with global reach, and working with coalition partners from around the world to set-up end to end communications capabilities in places like Baghdad. Like many army officers Helen’s career was varied and included roles in training, recruitment, and various operational roles. But after 16 years, Helen made the decision to leave the Army, and put in place a detailed 4-year exit strategy.

### Civilian transition

Central to Helen’s exit strategy was the need to broaden her skill base and gain a better understanding of how the military interacted with industry, so she moved to a role in Defence procurement. She also studied a Master’s Degree from the Defence Academy. *“My logic was that just my military career in isolation wasn’t sufficient to differentiate myself in the civilian jobs market, so I wanted to do something about this that would set me apart,”* she reasoned.

Helen also engaged with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) where she embarked on a business accounting course to gain a more in-depth understanding of accounting practices and the financial side of business management. *“While the course was excellent, listening to other people’s experiences and the journeys they were on in their transition was equally fascinating,”* she recalled.

With her Master’s Degree secured, she left the military to join a Danish software company as a Business Development Manager covering Western Europe and North Africa. After three years she saw an opportunity to move to a Multinational US IT company specialising in digital transformations. This company provided a wider portfolio, providing end to end capabilities. Helen’s role focused on the UK MOD in particular. *“All of the decisions were conscious, and part of my broader strategy. I was keen to reduce the amount of time I was travelling overseas with work, while broadening my skills and experiences.”*

## Life at Fujitsu

Despite being approached on a previous occasion when the timing wasn't right for Helen, in February 2021, she made the positive decision to join Fujitsu. The move was driven by the culture of the organisation which she had diligently researched with both past and present employees from within her network. *"The culture of openness, diversity and teamwork was a constant thread through the people I'd spoken with. I was also aware of people who had recently left the military to join Fujitsu, and I knew these were good people, so it made sense for me to follow,"* she explained.

Helen joined Fujitsu's Defence & National Security division as the Business Development Lead for Army and Deployed Operations, a role that allows her to exploit both her technical knowledge and military experience to the maximum.

And while the time of her joining wasn't ideal, with many COVID restrictions still in place, she feels that her induction was as seamless as it could be: *"Despite the difficult circumstances, the company went out of its way to make my introduction and transition as smooth as possible."*

Helen is delighted with her decision to join Fujitsu, and the capacity in which she works which enables her to utilise her military career practically every day. And when asked to think about her long-term future, her eyes are firmly set on Fujitsu: *"I view myself as a round peg in a round hole! I understand the customer, the processes and the challenges they face, all thanks to my 20-year military background. There's no substitute for that,"* she concludes.

## Why Fujitsu?

For over 50 years we have innovated with the MOD, Government Departments and intelligence communities, co-creating new technologies and capabilities. As a result, Fujitsu has around 4,000 security cleared staff and the experience to deliver and manage both generic industry offerings and those tailored to specialist needs at OFFICIAL, SECRET and ABOVE SECRET classifications.

Our extensive experience working within Defence, and National Security has enabled us to recognise the significant contribution that veterans and reserve personnel bring to the commercial sector. For many years, Fujitsu has helped Service leavers to transition from military to civilian life. Thanks to our close working partnership with Career Transition Partnership (CTP) and CTP Assist we provide the opportunity for veterans to develop rewarding careers within our organisation.

Today, 15% of Fujitsu's security cleared staff who work in our Defence & National Security business originate from a Services background. They fulfil a wide variety of roles from Project Management, Security Architects and Customer Solution Architects, to 1st, 2nd and 3rd Line support roles, Service Engineers and Test Analysts.



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