

FBL Employable YOU - 16 June 2022 - Making the most of YOU-oKSC115qCyw-720p-1655463540954

ROB MOORE: And welcome back to our third session. So this is the session where we're looking at making the most of you. What is it that you already have? What experience, what skills, what competencies do you have that you can make the most of? As before, we've got George and Matt on the hot desk. And they'll be answering your questions as we go through. And we also have HJ who will be looking to take your comments and thoughts.

Now, we've got lots of things for you to engage with this time. We have two widgets, so there's two questions there. Have you ever been a waiter or worked in a bar? And do you have any caring responsibilities? So we'd like you to share your thoughts on that. And then there are two questions you can answer as well.

So first one is, what sorts of skills do you think that you can draw on? And secondly, what skills has your experience given you that employers might find interesting? So this third session, we are joined again by Sam and Rose. You've come back from the previous sessions to join us. And we've got Suz with us. So welcome, Suz. Great to have you.

And all three of them are student experience managers. I don't know what the collective name is for student experience managers. But I'm going to give it one- a splendour of student experience managers. That's what we've got. So we're going to learn from their experience today. So the first question is asking you to reflect on the jobs that you've done in the past and how these have helped develop your skills. And we're going to go to Sam first. So, Sam, tell us about your experience.

SAM WOODS-PEEL: I have quite a lot of experience of jobs, because I'm quite old. I worked as an archaeologist while I was a student. So I did a law degree back at the end of the '80s. And I worked as a paid archaeologist. This was the days before time team. And everybody wanted to volunteer. So I got paid 30 pounds a week.

But what that gave me was attention to detail, which is absolutely critical to be a lawyer. You need to pay attention to the finer points and being able to interpret evidence. You dig a trench, you see what's in it, you have to work out what it all means. That's exactly what a lawyer does. You look at evidence, you interpret it, and you come up with solutions for a problem.

We also filled in a lot of forms as archaeologists. There's a form for everything, very much like working in a law firm. It's all about the forms. And the forms and attention to detail go together. So actually, for me, being an archaeologist is a really good training for the skills needed to be a successful practitioner of law. I also worked as an usherette in a theatre. This was while I was doing my PhD. And that is great for customer service. Because you deal with people who are happy, you deal with people who are sad, and unhappy, and who are complaining. And I worked taking tickets. You have to get people in. You have to get people out. So there's a high pressure. I worked on the kiosk selling sweets. I worked with an ice cream tray.

Now, you might think, what skills can I get from that? I had to do mental arithmetic. Because I had to add up various combinations of 1 pound 50, 1 pound 70, and 1 pound 90, because I didn't have a calculator. I didn't have a till. I had to do it all in my head. And people want to get eating. They don't want me to be spending ages working out how much to give me. So I think any sort of service thing like that.

And Pam mentioned in the last session about working in a bar is absolutely great customer service experience. Don't leave it off your CV. It's really important. I just wanted to mention about the Open degree. There was a question in the last session about, how do you describe an Open degree to an employer?

And I think rejoice in the fact that you have done an Open degree. Because it's not limited to the skills that you get on a named business or law degree. You get skills from multiple areas. So don't hide it, celebrate it. I am doing the final module on my own Open degree. And I would describe my Open degree as science based, specifically physics and astrophysics. The majority of my subjects were in that.

If you're doing a social science based one, then describe it as that- modules mostly social science based so that the employer has an idea where your specialism is. If you have covered arts, humanities, social science, and science, say so. You're going to get skills from all of those subjects. And I think an employer, once they understand what you've done, would welcome an Open degree, because of the skills it brings you.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. Thanks for that, Sam. And, yes, of course, one of our unique offerings at the Open University is this ability to build your own degree, so, definite. And there are other sessions which look at this specifically, so check out some of our recordings. And we do have specific sessions on the Open degree.

So we're going to get to Suz in a second. But you've been telling us about your bar work. So if you'd like to flash the widget on the screen, we can actually see that 56% of you have worked in a bar. But 44% of you have worked in a bar. And we heard that Sam has. And I'm pretty sure Suz has as well. So, Suz, tell us about your experience and how you've managed to make the most out of that.

SUZ CORCORAN: So I've worked as a waitress, but not in a bar. In a cafe. I've also worked as a cleaner. I've worked in a hospice. I volunteered at a school for children with disabilities. And I've run community-centred clubs for those children as well. And again, you might think, well, what's that got to do with being a lawyer or indeed a student experience manager?

But if you think about it, as a waitress or a waiter, you have to deal and communicate with people. It's very good for conflict resolution. It's very good for having an eye for detail. It's good for listening and communication skills. If you are, for example, volunteering to run a store at a fair for a charity, that's creativity. It's time management. It's working in a team.

So it builds up those soft skills that we might call them. But they're integral to being a good lawyer, to being a good business person, to being a good student experience manager and tutor, and also working in a hospice. That builds up resilience.

It also involves different ways of communication. And if you think about the jobs or the volunteering work that you've done and the different types of people that you have spoken to and communicated with, you're building up your ability to communicate. And I am fairly certain that is a key skill that every employer is going to be looking for.

So make the most. Look at what you've done. You might think being a cleaner is not that exciting. And it wasn't exciting, but it did teach me time management. It also introduced me to lots of people. And I was

cleaning the office of the CEO, as we would call them now. He didn't have that title when I was there. But that's essentially what he was.

But I was also cleaning offices of a lot of other people in that company. So I got to know a wide variety of people. So look at not just your job title, but actually, what it brings you and what it gives you. And how does that make you more attractive to an employer?

ROB MOORE: Thank you, Suz. That's fantastic. I'm going to come back to you in a little while and find out more about how you got into the legal profession. But before we do that, HJ, what's been said in the Chat? What things are students sharing with us at the moment?

HJ: Well, in terms of skills from the workplaces we've worked at- and a lot of people in the Chat have worked as waiters, or in bars, or in related service industries as well. So Alexander had a great one- caring for yourself. I mean, that's a really important skill.

Because whether you're acting as a carer for someone else or in your own work, making sure that you're happy and healthy is something that really help is a good skill. An employer knowing that you're able to look after yourself is good. It shows the skills. And you can be effective in your role.

Allison says being polite and listening. Jonathan says teamwork, stakeholder engagement, using multiple applications, decision-making, confidence. And you may have picked up training as well in that industry. That goes elsewhere. So, for example, health and safety, first aid. I mean, I did first aid while I was working in a fast food chain. And my next job after that absolutely loved that I had first aid. Because they didn't need to train someone else to do it in the office.

Jonathan says work experience helps with competency-based questions and interviews. And Natasha says, I love that example of learning conflict resolution as a waiter. I think anyone that's worked in a service-type industry knows that you got a thick skin. And you're very good at solving conflicts.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. So I know we've had a widget looking at caring responsibilities. So let's see what you're talking about there. And as HJ said, there are certain skills and abilities that come through caring from other people. I help people to write CVs. And one of the real challenges is for people to recognise what is actually different and important in what they do. They just think it's normal. So it's a real trick to pick out some of these key points.

So I'm just going to go back quickly to Suz. Because we didn't really get a chance to look at your route into the profession. Sam, we managed to see yours. But, Suz, how exactly did you become a lawyer? As quickly as you can, just through the steps that you went through.

SUZ CORCORAN: So I became a lawyer by accident, really. It wasn't something that I'd planned on doing. When I was younger, I wanted to be a lollipop lady. Because they just have this quiet confidence and authority. And also, mine was very impossibly glamorous for a lollipop lady. And I loved her, and I wanted to be her.

But when I went to university, I didn't know actually what I wanted to do. So I did an English and French degree. And when I did that, I came out. And so I still don't know what I want to do. So I applied to a law firm for two weeks work experience. And I stayed there for 17 years. I started on reception.

Then I did my legal executive qualifications. Then I did a graduate diploma in law. Then I did my LPC. Didn't need a training contract, because I'd worked all the way through. So I didn't need to do one of those. And then I qualified. So I did it a really, really, really long way around. But I was gaining experience all the time that I was doing it, all the time that I was working, which was really invaluable.

And the first two weeks that I started at the law firm on work experience, my first court case that I attended was the first hearing in a murder case, which was a bit of a boring hearing. But the atmosphere was electric. I met a barrister who I've been work friends with for over 20-odd years and also got involved in a family case that really ignited my passion. And that's what made me realise this is what I want to do. I finally found what I wanted to do at that age.

ROB MOORE: That's brilliant.

SUZ CORCORAN: And it was great. It was great.

ROB MOORE: So, no, fant- and, of course, now, you're passing on all your experience to our students and helping them to gain the similar experiences themselves. So thank you-

SUZ CORCORAN: Absolutely.

ROB MOORE: -for that, Suz. We're going to come back to you again in a second in our final topic for this session. There's a new question and a new widget for you to engage with. First question is, are you planning to study something else after you graduate? So if you'd like to give us your thoughts on that. And then, also, think about the course you might go on and study after graduation. So, Rosie, we're going to come to you now, just to talk about how you can carry on developing those skills. So having looked at the skills we've got, looked at the competence we've got, what can students do to carry on?

ROSIE WATSON: Thanks, Rob. Well, the obvious, I suppose next step for a lot of students might be a postgraduate degree in a similar area to where they have studied. And of course, that is an option. And it's a very, very important one. But there are other options available.

And I would like just to introduce everyone today to the microcredentials option. Now, these are run on two different platforms. We've got the FutureLearn platform, which is where we have the microcredentials that, in many cases, not all, attract credits that can be offset against some future postgraduate study.

These are paid for courses. They last 12 weeks if it's a postgraduate course. All kinds of topics are covered. I've just, in fact, had direct experience myself. I've just been studying on one of those postgraduate microcredentials. And I can tell you, they're pretty challenging. You can expect to be challenged which, of course, is what one would expect at postgraduate level. But there are also-

ROB MOORE: I don't want to interrupt you too much, Rosie.

ROSIE WATSON: No, no.

ROB MOORE: It's just the fact that-

ROSIE WATSON: Sure.

ROB MOORE: -we've got a couple of things to get through. So microcredentials- they can access those on the FutureLearn platform.

ROSIE WATSON: Yes.

ROB MOORE: So I'm assuming students would-

ROSIE WATSON: And also-

ROB MOORE: Go ahead. Yeah, carry on.

ROSIE WATSON: -OpenLearn, so look at OpenLearn. Thousands of courses, which are free, OK?

ROB MOORE: Absolutely.

ROSIE WATSON: Two-week courses and four-week courses absolutely free. Yeah.

ROB MOORE: I recommend a lot of the OpenLearn courses to my students. Because there's some great study skills, and some other elements that you can develop, and great as a resource to work through with your kids. I just wanted to jump very quickly into Suz, because we've got about a minute left. So, Suz,

looking at the skills that you've developed, how should students approach this? What can they do when they're trying to figure out what to do next? What approach should they take?

SUZ CORCORAN: I think if you look at what interests you, you look at the things that you've done, you look at it from a fresh perspective. So how is my caring responsibilities? What has that taught me? Time management, communication, the ability to take on detail, the ability to act in a stressful situation. Look at all those positives that you can pull out of something that can be a very difficult time.

And then look to see if there's anything else that you can add on to it. So like Rosie was saying about OpenLearn courses. There's courses about study skills, about note-taking, the ability to be concise. And to convey an idea to something, to somebody is something that an employer is going to want their employees to be able to do. You don't need waffle the vast majority of times. You need conciseness. So even if it's a course just to look at study skills, to build upon them. Have a look at some of the OpenLearning courses. Do things about SWOT analysis for business students. That might be something that you think, actually, if I can do a strength and a weakness report, then that helps me look at both sides of an argument, which is an essential skill for a budding lawyer, but also really good in other applications in your life, in your day-to-day life, helps you make decisions. So just-

ROB MOORE: Absolutely.

SUZ CORCORAN: -look at what there is, and build upon it, really.

ROB MOORE: So it's taking advantage of things that you know, the things you do naturally. So thank you for that, Suz. I can't believe we've run out of time. That's the quickest hour I think I've ever had. We're just going to go over to HJ, just for some final comments from the Chat. And I'll look at the final widget. So, HJ, what's the group saying? What are we getting from those in the Chat box?

HJ: So today, we've been sharing a lot about our skills. And we are very interested in our OpenLearn courses and microcredentials. We're always looking- something to do in between our modules and to prepare for the future as well, which is fantastic. But I'd just like to say it's been great chatting to everyone today. And thank you for Fred, George, and Matt that have been in the Chat with me and helping us out and giving us some great information.

All the resources we've been talking about are on the session page for today as well. So I'll put the link for that in the Chat. So you can find out a bit more on some of the topics that we've been talking about. But I look forward to seeing everyone at our next session.

ROB MOORE: OK, thank you, HJ. And it's great to see that 75% of you are considering going on to do something else after graduation. Be warned, though. You can become an OU junkie. 1995- I started off doing a professional certificate in management. And here I am 27 years later and three master's degrees later still planning my next module. So be warned it gets addictive.

So, great to have everybody with us today. I'd just like to say thank you to Sam, Suz, and Rosie for your input. We definitely need to be booking hours, not minutes for these sessions. And I look forward to seeing you with us again. And thank you to everybody who's joined us in the Chat. It really is great to see your input and see what you've got to say and what's impacting on you. And, HJ, thanks, as always, for your support.

We look forward to seeing you at the next session. We're going to be looking at some research activities taking place in Wales next Thursday. So hopefully, we'll see you then. Till then, it's Rob in his study shack, saying goodbye. And I'll see you at the next session Cheers.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

