



STUDENT RESOURCE

Career Story: Establishing a graduate career: resilience and purpose

Degree: Double degree in Arts and Business

Completion year: 2017

Years since graduation: 2

Career story themes: Be authentic, be resilient and be pro-active

Ruth's Story

Ruth graduated in 2017 with a double degree in Arts and Business, which she chose because of her "passion and curiosity for people". The combination of majors in Arts and Business led her to discover a love of market research.

Ruth lived at home during her university studies and she recalls having a very busy, but rich, life and making lots of friends. She spent about 30 hours per week in part-time work, and due to her busy workload she was unable to participate in clubs, societies or in overseas study programs. In order to manage work and study, Ruth adopted a very structured approach to the week and she also worked out a strategy to connect with business so that she could become more aware of the opportunities and what might be needed.

Finding graduate work

Ruth was determined to pursue a career in market research, so once she had completed her

double degree, she continued to work casually whilst seeking temporary part-time and/or full-time positions.

There was a strong purpose behind Ruth's quest for graduate work; however, her interest and drive to find the right kind of market research job also led her to discover that there were limited graduate programs. Ruth recalls being terrified of going to the employment agencies and contacting the companies in which she was interested. However, she was very comfortable in applying to organisations online and she used this strategy to pursue as many options as she could.

Ruth also printed off multiple copies of her CV and cover letter. She began to leave a hard copy of these with agencies and potential employers, with the aim of getting a "foot in the door" and to leave the impression that she was proactive and determined. She was relieved to receive follow-up calls for positions, and the follow-up calls enabled her to network frequently with industry contacts.

"When applying for a job, you need to be authentic ... be yourself and immerse yourself in opportunities that come your way."

Ruth particularly liked one large, multi-national market research company, which was impressed by her approach to seeking employment. The company is one of the world's leading insight and consulting companies, employing tens of thousands of people worldwide and providing services for clients in most countries of the world, many of whom are in the [Fortune Top 500](#) companies. Ruth was interviewed for a graduate position and believed that she had done well, so she was devastated when she did not get the job.

The company invited Ruth to take on some casual work. Undeterred by her failure to get a full-time position, she agreed to do this. She fell in love with the work and quickly demonstrated her eagerness to work hard and to learn the business. The company's country manager recognised Ruth's work ethic and her proactive approach to gaining a foothold in the industry. As a result, four months later she was recruited outside the formal graduate recruitment process into a graduate role.

Ruth is now directly involved with local, national and global clients for whom she helps to deliver actionable insights. She has worked in brand, product innovation, shopper and creative development, fast-moving consumer goods, technology, and superannuation. She also tells the story of a project with a new global client that did not go to plan. The answer here was, "try not to panic: think on your feet and to come up with solutions to solve the problem".

Ruth has recently been chosen to guide the relationship between her employer and university graduates, helping to shape the graduate and internship program and casual work opportunities.

Getting ahead

What did Ruth learn from her experience of seeking graduate work? Her advice is simple:

"When applying for a job, you need to be authentic. There's no need for a glittery study statement. You need to be willing to let people know you want the job. When you're searching for your dream career, be yourself and immerse yourself in opportunities that come your way."

Further resources

Activity: [What is your career vision?](#)

Quiz: [Lifestyle quiz](#)

Video: [Dealing with failure](#)

Enhancing resilience:

[How to become more resilient](#)

[How to deal with stress](#)

[How do I develop my support networks?](#)

[Growth mindset](#)

Learning from biographies and career stories

What do you see when you meet a professional?

Most of the time, we see only the role someone holds now. It is likely, however, that the person has experienced a career with lots of twists and turns.

Get the most out of reading career stories or biographies by asking yourself some of the questions to the right.

1. What do you expect you will have to learn during your career?
2. What might you need to do in order to keep learning?
3. What differences, common issues, and links can you make to your own career journey?
4. Identify and reflect on key decision points in your personal and professional development, and then consider:
 - a. Who played a significant role at these times?
 - b. To whom did you go to for advice?
 - c. What can you put in place for the next time you face a major decision?
5. Biographical accounts raise a number of challenges and opportunities. These include innovative collaborations, work within other sectors, diverse locations, and different modes of work. Look for examples of these in your discipline and reflect on what might be of interest to you:
 - a. What interests you, and what can you do to make this a reality?
 - b. What challenges do you foresee, and how will you prepare for these?
6. Biographical accounts often tell us something about the interests, passions, and motivations of the people involved. Can you think of ways to combine your interests and your future work?
7. What would you like to achieve as a professional?

This career story was developed through a grant funded by the [Australian Business Deans Council](#). The Business Student Toolkit can be found [here](#).

This resource was developed by [Nell Kimberley](#) (Monash University) in collaboration with [Dawn Bennett](#) (Curtin University), 2019

Developing Employability is led by Professor Dawn Bennett, Curtin University, Australia.

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