developing Employability

STUDENT RESOURCE

# Career Story: Finding a career that's a good fit

**Degree:** Master of Business (Science and Technology)

**Completion year:** 2016

**Years since graduation:** 3

**Career story themes:** Personal fit, growth mindset, broad capabilities, emotional intelligence

## Mark's story

Originally from Western Australia, Mark commenced his undergraduate studies interstate with a Bachelor of Engineering (Chemical). At that time, his aim was to secure a job in the petroleum field. However, a year into his engineering course, Mark decided to undertake a Bachelor of Commerce majoring in finance. He also studied a Diploma of Languages, focusing on French. While studying three courses, he found that he enjoyed elements of both engineering and commerce.

As a student, Mark worked part-time in a pizza shop. After speaking with friends who also worked there, he thought it might be useful to try a work-integrated-learning (industry placement) internship with one of the "Big Four" accounting organisations in Australia. The industry placement program confirmed Mark's interest in the business scene. It was at this point that his thinking about a career in petroleum morphed into something quite different and he decided to focus on business studies.

### *Getting graduate work*

The doors to Mark's current position opened when he obtained a vacation program opportunity. He had heard that consulting would be interesting, but he had no idea what to expect. He also had little by way of a technological background and hoped that he might be able to draw from his engineering background. Yet Mark found himself part of a technology consulting team for a large, multi-national consulting firm. Mark found that doing real projects in a real project team was highly stimulating; this demonstrated to him the importance of technical, cross-functional and professional skills.

At the end of 2016, Mark was offered a full-time graduate position as a consultant with Deloitte. He recalls that the role was like being "thrown into the deep end!" Mark was placed in various projects as and when required. He really enjoyed the experience of constantly observing and learning a business which was fast-paced and dynamic, and he stayed in that role for a year. The team in which he was placed was highly technical, focusing on analytics and information management, and drawing data from human resources (HR) data or Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Mark realised at this point that he could leverage his engineering education but that his strengths lay with his people and communication skills.

His next role was as a Project Manager in a business intelligence team. The team was quite diverse and this enabled Mark to leverage his strengths in functional engagement and

communication. He found particular strengths in relation to providing insights and analytical models that would assist clients with their problem-solving and decision-making. Mark reflects that this environment was the right cultural fit for him. He relished the pace and type of work, which he believes was suitable to his personal "disposition".

### *How has Mark been successful?*

Mark reflects that to be successful in the business environment, graduates need to be able to tolerate ambiguity. Graduates also need strong analytic and problem-solving skills alongside excellent communication skills. Mark now has well-developed stakeholder management skills. He has an affinity for working with people and he enjoys conversations, finding it easy to talk to clients and get to the heart of their problems. He can also be persuasive and likes to gain consensus in meetings.

Part of Mark's success relates to his ability to be reflective about his work; he is aware of his positive attributes, but he is also cognisant that there are areas of his work still to develop. He adopts what he calls an "improvement mindset", often asking himself questions such as "How can I increase my self-awareness?" and "What do I need to do to achieve a certain outcome in the next meeting?" He is also conscious that clients have different preferences, so he makes the effort to "be empathic with others" and believes that this is absolutely crucial to succeeding in today's business environment.

While emotional quotient (intelligence) is important, Mark believes that graduates should be "well-rounded and cross-functional in terms of their knowledge and skillset". He feels that understanding the analytical side of any business is important because it is a key driver for decision making: "you can't do strategy without quantitative input, but you don't have to be an expert in modelling".

***There's "no point in looking for the perfect job opportunity". Take opportunities as they present themselves, because "there is always something to be learned".***

Mark's advice to graduates is that there's "no point in looking for the perfect job opportunity". He thinks that graduates should take opportunities as they present themselves, because "there is always something to be learned, something that you can take from that experience".

Mark's key message is that everything in business is complex and interconnected. Being open to diverse experiences, teams and opportunities can only make you a better professional. The following resources will help you to take the next steps.

- Video: How and why to ask questions
- Video: Failure as an opportunity for quality improvement
- Activity: How opportunity awareness can help plan your career
- Quiz: How good are your emotional regulation strategies?

# 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 forsee, 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.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. You can view a copy of the license here.