



Career Story:

The value of experience outside the curriculum

Degree: Double degree in Marketing and Management

Completion year: 2018

Years since graduation: 1

Career story themes: Getting to know your industry, learning from experience

April's Story

April completed a double degree in Marketing and Management in 2018. A self-confessed "science nerd", she didn't like business at school and she initially chose to study podiatry. She enjoyed her first year as a podiatry major, but when she took a marketing elective, she fell in love with marketing. After first year, she transferred into the business double degree program.

April firmly believes that students "learn most through outside experiences", and during her time at university she participated in a wide range of student leadership programs and other experiences. To develop her business knowledge and skills, she pursued internship opportunities across a range of industries. These included a month-long internship focussed on digital marketing, which she did not enjoy.

The negative experience prompted April to realise that "understanding the industry you intend to be part of is very important". At one point, she decided to learn more about sponsorship in sport and took another internship with a large and prominent sporting association. She reflects that these internship opportunities helped both in developing her knowledge and business skills, and also in giving her confidence in her abilities.

Finding graduate work

Gaining employment through a graduate program involved many failed attempts and adventures. On one occasion, April caught a tram to the city to attend an interview. She dressed appropriately, but wore old sandals for travelling, keeping her good shoes in her bag. Unfortunately, as she alighted the tram, one of her good shoes fell out of her bag and became lodged under the tram. Here she was, on her way to an important interview, wearing old and unprofessional looking shoes.

There was no time for April to buy new shoes, so what did she do? When April entered the meeting room for her interview, she told the interview panel what had happened and she laughed at her experience. This immediately established rapport with her interviewers, who clearly admired her resilience and good-natured response to the situation.

April secured a place in a three-year graduate development program with a large, multi-national confectionery company. The graduate program was designed to expose graduates to different parts of the business and enable cross-functional agility. She currently holds the position of Territory Sales Manager. She suggests that the biggest challenges in her role are dealing with ambiguity and having to embrace and manage change.

Getting ahead in the right career

April recalls that the interview process is particularly gruelling for graduates who are seeking a place on a graduate program. She recalls that interview questions invariably dwell on hypothetical scenarios and that “every example had to be a different one”. Her advice is to

“... get as much experience as you can to prepare you for the interviews. Have experiences to talk about that make you unique, and avoid ‘plastic’ answers.”

April also advises that students get to know their industry by embracing multiple experiences. This way, you can position yourself to

“love what you’re doing. Be passionate about your work, because you spend so much time there!”

Further resources

The following resources will help you to discover the career drivers that are important to you. Following April’s advice, you might also like to read “The art of the interview”.

[Design your future](#)

[The art of the interview](#)

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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